

## We are facing Eurasian wild hogs, not farm pigs!

Michigan is one of more than 40 states with growing populations of wild hogs. Once confined mostly to the southern U.S., this invasive, exotic species has recently occupied new regions. This has not occurred because of any natural range expansion. It's the result of intentional and/or accidental releases of Eurasian wild hogs. Since 2001, escapes have occurred at game ranches and other fenced facilities around Michigan. By 2012, wild hogs were confirmed in 69 of the state's 83 counties.

A statewide ban on importing or raising Eurasian wild hogs went into effect in 2010. But today, wild hogs are reproducing in the wild. There are frequent sightings of hogs and their signs and some crop damage in significant parts of at least eight Lower Peninsula Counties—Mecosta, Gratiot, Saginaw, Bay, Midland, Arenac, Gladwin, and Roscommon. There is less information about hog



Piglets are striped.

densities in other counties. As compared with the years when wild hogs first started showing up in Michigan, fewer people are now reporting their wild hog sightings.

It is legal to shoot and/or trap wild hogs in Michigan. Nearly all of the wild hogs examined by biologists or photographed to date appear to be Eurasian wild hogs. Small numbers of hybrids with domestic pig ancestry have recently been detected in Mecosta County, Saginaw County, and one Upper Peninsula location. But the state's wild hog population is clearly dominated by Eurasian stock. They were originally brought into game ranches precisely because they tend to be taller at the shoulder, leaner, meaner, and faster than domestic pigs or most hybrids.



Eurasian wild hogs, like this one photographed in Midland County, are typically of solid color, have erect ears and long snouts.



Photo of wild hogs taken by a trail camera in Midland County.

## What you can do to help! The Michigan Wild Hog Removal Program

The primary wild hog reduction effort in our state is the Michigan Wild Hog Removal Program that involves the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Wildlife Services Branch, Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan Pork Producers Association, and other private-sector groups. The critical features of the Program include the lending of hog traps to landowners, providing information on wild hogs and trapping options, and training volunteers to monitor and trap hogs.

### Trapping can help!

The program provides (free of charge) 15-foot-diameter hog traps and will train you how to use them. If you don't want to trap hogs yourself, the Program can provide trained volunteers to catch the hogs. You will be under no obligation, except to allow direct access to trapping site(s) you specify. You can control where and when trapping occurs. Hogs are shot in the trap—this is not a catch and transfer program.



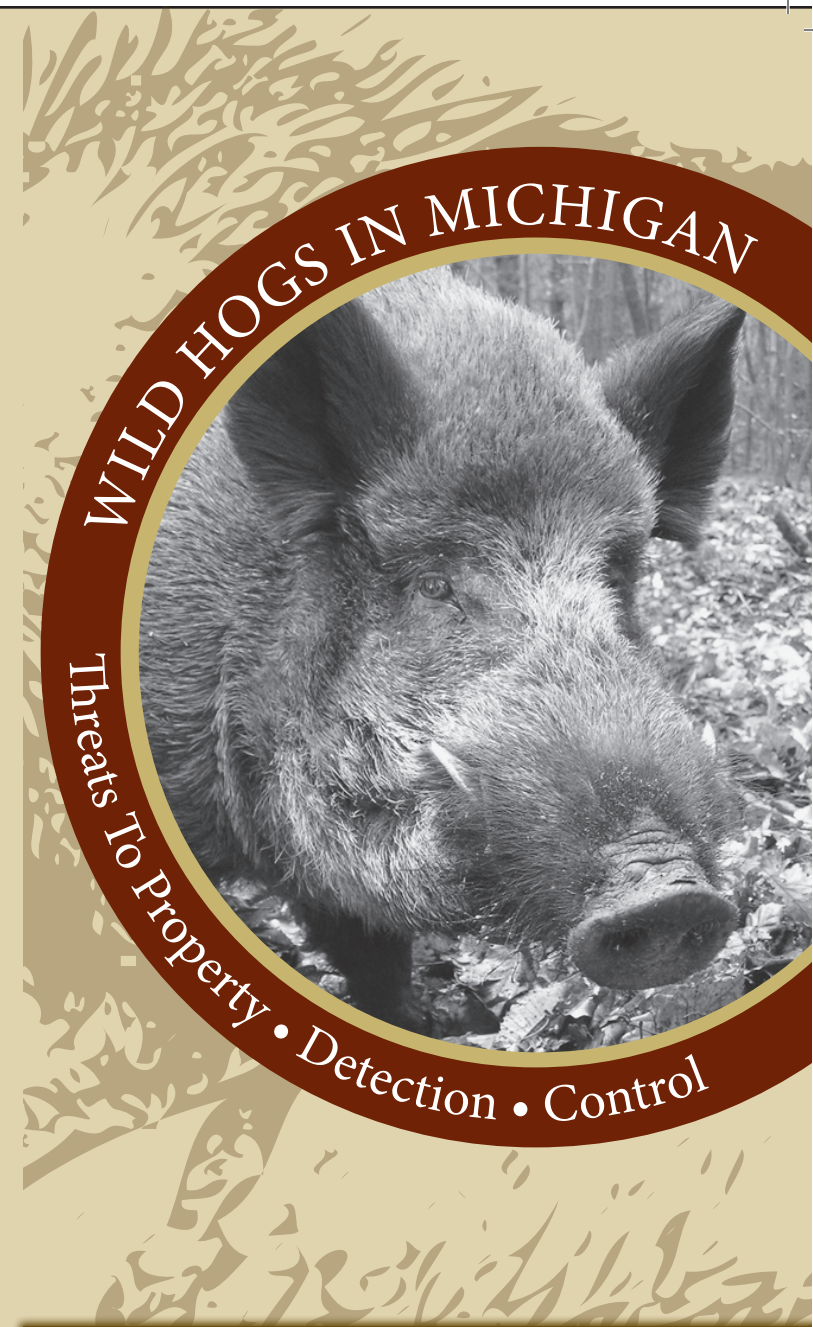
Empty hog trap.



Wild hog in a trap in Michigan.

For more information, call The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy at 517-641-7677 and visit [www.MiWildlife.org](http://www.MiWildlife.org), or contact the Wildlife Services Branch of the USDA at 517-336-1928.

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## Wild hogs are everybody's problem!

Even if you doubt wild hogs will ever directly damage your property, there are still compelling reasons to support their control. Studies have clearly shown that wild hogs are predators on native species ranging from ground-nesting birds to deer fawns, and they can spread diseases.



Deer fawns are vulnerable to wild hogs.

Wild hogs can carry or transmit more than 30 diseases and 37 parasites

that potentially affect livestock, pets, wildlife, and even people. In Michigan, the highly contagious pseudorabies is at the top of the watch-list of disease control experts.

Millions of dollars were spent eradicating pseudorabies in domestic swine. A re-occurrence of that disease, which affects newborn pigs, could not only hamper production, but prevent Michigan's pork producers from shipping animals out-of-state. This would be devastating to this important agricultural industry.

Although humans are not susceptible to pseudorabies, the disease can be transmitted from wild hogs to dogs and cats, as well as cattle, sheep, and goats. And wild hogs, along with deer, carry the same type of tuberculosis (TB) that affects cattle. Recent detection of TB in cattle in northern Saginaw County raised concerns about wild hogs carrying that disease.

Veterinarians taking blood samples from wild hogs at a trapping site in Mecosta County.



## Detecting wild hogs

The first step in controlling wild hogs is early detection. Wild hogs are usually active only at night. Few are spotted during the day, even where deer hunting pressure is heavy and hogs are fairly abundant. So most landowners have wild hogs around long before they ever see one.



Wild hog wallow in Mecosta County. Photo by R. Buikema

Two effective and low-cost ways to detect wild hogs are using trail cameras over bait, and searching for signs. Among the more effective hog baits in Michigan are soured corn, various mashes, and gobs of used cooking grease; however, many other types of food can lure wild hogs. Using perforated bait tubes can help prevent other wildlife, especially raccoons and turkeys, from eating the bait. An important key to detecting hogs with trail cameras is to reduce human scent at the bait/camera site through use of rubber gloves and scent-lock clothing sprays.



Wild hog bed in winter.

With practice, it is possible to distinguish wild hog from deer tracks. Hog tracks tend to be rounder



Sign of raccoon feeding on grubs by peeling back sod. Hog rooting is typically deeper and looks rougher.



Wild hog track in Saginaw County showing dew claws outside of hoofs.

Deer track showing dew claws in line with hoofs.

and a hog's dew claws are set wider than the hoofs. However, on many surfaces deer and hog tracks look very similar. Detection is easier if one focuses on more distinguishable signs such as rooting, wallows, tree rubs, and beds.



Tree rubbed (showing mud) by a wild hog in Mecosta County. Photo by R. Buikema

Searching for wild hog signs in Michigan is usually easiest in winter, early spring, and late summer (especially where sources of water tend to dry up).



Lawn damage by wild hogs in Midland County.

## Wild hogs destroy property!



A "sounder" in Southeast Michigan.

The basic social group of wild hogs is called a "sounder," and typically consists of a dominant (older) female, a few other females, and some young hogs. The amount of damage that occurs when a property is visited by wild hogs is closely related to the number of animals and the size of piglets in the sounder, as well as the time of the year and ground cover. Documented crop losses in Michigan have ranged from just a few rows of trampled and eaten corn to complete loss of all beans in a 42-acre field!



Corn damaged by a wild hog in Gratiot County.

In counties with growing populations of wild hogs, more Michigan citizens are learning the hard way about the destructive nature of these animals. The wild hogs feed on corn and beans, and root in seeded winter wheat fields. They also tear up lawns and hay fields while searching for grubs. Many Michigan hunters trying to manage properties for deer and other wildlife have food plots devastated by wild hogs. Depending on the number in the sounder, they can destroy several acres of crops in just a day or tear up a yard in a few hours. And they tend to come back!