



**Don't be confused. A javelina is NOT a feral hog!**



# New Mexico Feral Hog Facts

## Feral Hogs, Ecosystems, and Wildlife

Feral hogs alter and damage habitat by causing erosion, uprooting native plants, spreading noxious weeds, damaging river and stream banks, and directly competing for resources important to wildlife. Feral hogs are aggressive predators that prey on nongame and game animals such as reptiles and ground-nesting birds, as well as larger prey such as deer and antelope fawns; they may also be a threat to local populations of threatened and endangered species. Feral hogs carry diseases that may be spread to wildlife.

## Feral Hog Hunting

No license is needed to hunt feral hogs in New Mexico. Hunters must only obtain permission from the landowner. Some hunters find hog hunting challenging because feral hogs are wary animals and become increasingly difficult to bag under hunting pressure. However, the presence of feral hogs often negatively affects sportsmen's ability to hunt native game. Hunters need to take special precautions when field dressing feral hog carcasses to avoid exposure to diseases.

**IMPORTANT:** Collared peccary (*Tayassu tajacu*), or javelina (pictured above), have pig-like features but are native to the Southwest. Collared peccaries have a pale-colored fur collar around their necks. **They are not feral hogs and are a protected game animal managed by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.** (Photo above courtesy of New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.)

## Feral hogs...

- are not protected or regulated by New Mexico wildlife or agricultural laws.
- alter wildlife habitat and compete with wild game, nongame, and threatened and endangered species for food, shelter, water, and open space.
- carry diseases transmissible to humans, wildlife, and livestock, and damage crops and rangelands important to our agricultural producers and food supply.
- adapt well to most North American environments, including the Southwest.
- may be hunted without a license in New Mexico; only landowner permission is needed.



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*Unless otherwise stated, photos courtesy of the USDA-Wildlife Services.*



Feral hog, feral pig, wild boar, wild or feral swine, and wild pig are all terms used to describe hogs that live outside sustained daily management by humans or are born and live in the wild. The term “feral hog” may refer to Eurasian wild boars, escaped domesticated hogs, and hybrids of the two. Regardless of the name, all of these terms refer to the same species of swine, *Sus scrofa*.

## Legal Status

Feral hogs are not protected or regulated by New Mexico wildlife or agricultural laws. There is no season or bag limit for feral hogs. They are unprotected and may be killed at any time in New Mexico. However, it is illegal to transport or release live wild or feral hogs anywhere in New Mexico or to profit from selling or hunting them.

## Economic Impacts

Approximately 4 million feral hogs cause an estimated one billion dollars in property damage each year in the United States. Economic data specific to New Mexico is not currently available.

## Hog History

Although little is known about their fate, an unknown number of pigs traveled with Francisco Vasquez de Coronado (1540-42) while he searched for the Seven Cities of Cibola in what is today the southwestern United States. “Homesteader” pigs in New Mexico were thought to originate during the 1930s, with populations thought to occur in Hidalgo, Otero, and Lincoln counties. Today in New Mexico, many feral hog populations are thought to be from naturally expanding populations and from illegal transport and release of feral hogs. At least three quarters of New Mexico is considered suitable habitat for feral hogs. In 2012, New Mexico had 17 counties with known feral hog populations.

## Feral Hog Biology and Identification

Feral hogs can reproduce rapidly and are highly adaptable to most environments in North America. Under favorable conditions, feral hogs may have 2 litters per year with 4-8 piglets in each litter. Female hogs, or sows, can have their first litter at about 8 months of age. Pig populations may get out of hand quickly if populations aren’t controlled and weather and habitat conditions are favorable. Feral hogs sometimes look like domestic pigs, but are usually identified by their coat color and pattern and may have a longer snout. Black is the common color of feral hogs, but brown, red, white, spotted, or belted and rarely blue or gray colors and patterns are possible.

## Humans and Hogs

There is a wide variety of diseases that hogs may carry that are transmissible to humans. Hunters that shoot and process feral hogs have the greatest chance of being exposed to one of these diseases, though environmental exposure to contaminated surface water is also possible. New Mexico residents may be exposed to the following diseases when handling feral hogs or in close association with feral hogs, their urine, feces, or other body fluids:

**Bacterial Diseases:** Brucellosis, Leptospirosis, and Salmonellosis

**Viral Diseases:** Influenza and Hepatitis E

**Parasitic Diseases:** Cryptosporidium, Giardia, and Trichinella

## Feral Hogs and Food Supply

Feral hogs damage crops and rangelands important to New Mexico’s economy and food production. Rooting, eating, and trampling behaviors damage crops, forage, water supplies, and infrastructure of farms and ranches. Feral hogs will kill lambs and calves. They may carry diseases that can infect livestock and have a great impact on agricultural production and trade. Diseases that could affect livestock include swine brucellosis, pseudorabies, leptospirosis, tuberculosis, and trichinosis. If a foreign animal disease, such as foot-and-mouth or classic swine fever (hog cholera), were to enter the United States, feral hogs could spread the disease to wildlife and livestock.

If you believe you have seen feral or wild hogs please contact USDA-Wildlife Services at (505) 346-2640. Please provide the date seen, specific location, how many, and a general description of their appearance.