



NWT COUNCIL ON INVASIVE SPECIES, PESTS, AND PATHOGENS



Wild Pigs (*Sus scrofa*)

A wild pig.
Photo: Ryan Brooke

IMPACTS

Wild pigs pose a threat to wildlife and their habitat in the NWT. They can damage native vegetation, and degrade water quality with their wallowing and rooting behaviours. They may prey upon native wildlife, including small mammals, amphibians, and the eggs of ground-nesting birds. They are also carriers of diseases infectious to wildlife, domestic animals and people.

INTRODUCTION

The Eurasian boar was first introduced into Canada in the 1980s as livestock. Pigs that escaped or were intentionally released from farms have resulted in free-ranging populations, which now include a mix of wild boar, domestic pigs, and their hybrids. While not in the NWT, they are well established in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

MANAGEMENT

A variety of methods are used to manage wild pigs, including trapping, toxicants, and professional culling. Recreational hunting is not an effective management technique for wild pigs and can actually make control efforts more difficult. Pigs are very smart and will quickly learn to avoid humans, move to new areas, and become nocturnal.

In the Northwest Territories, any pig found outside an enclosure is considered a pest and may be killed. While no hunting licence is required, any person who harvests a wild pig must report it to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources within 72 hours.

BIOLOGY

There are no native pigs in Canada and all are from domestic sources. A wild pig is any pig outside an enclosure. These animals can easily adapt to new environments, have high reproductive rates, a very generalist diet, and a lack of natural predators, which make them highly invasive.

IDENTIFICATION

Wild pigs can exhibit many colour variations, ranging from very dark to pink or lighter, and may have stripes or spots in any combination of colours. Even escapees from domestic pig barns can quickly grow dense hair to help them to survive the cold.



A light-coloured pig with dark spots. Photo: Ryan Brooke



A dark-coloured pig. Photo: Ryan Brooke

RANGE

The main established wild pig populations in Canada are in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. There are smaller, localized populations of wild pigs in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec. The closest reported locations of wild pigs are about 200 kilometres south of the NWT border in British Columbia and Alberta.

HABITAT

Wild pigs can adapt to a wide range of habitats, but generally prefer agricultural farmland and habitats with forest cover. For shelter, they will build nests under snow, vegetation or soil. In summer they can be found close to wetlands and other water sources where they can wallow to stay cool.

SIMILAR SPECIES

There are no other species that can be easily confused with a wild pig in the NWT. All pigs and their hybrids belong to the same species – *Sus scrofa*. Any pig outside an enclosure is considered a wild pig. Other common names for wild pigs include wild boar, wild hog, feral hog, feral swine, razorback, Eurasian wild boar, and Russian wild boar.



A wild pig with a litter of piglets. Photo: Ryan Brooke



A sounder group of wild pigs. Photo: Ryan Brooke