AgriLIFE EXTENSION
Texas A&M System

TSSWCB

Corral Traps for Capturing Feral Hogs

Chancey Lewis, Matt Berg, James C. Cathey, Jim Gallagher, Nikki Dictson, and Mark McFarland
Texas AgriLife Extension Service
The Texas A&M University System

As is the case in many areas across Texas, feral hog numbers appear to be on the rise in the Plum Creek Watershed. To prevent negative impacts to agriculture and water quality, an integrated management approach of multiple techniques often yields the best potential for success. Large corral traps have proven extremely effective for reducing hog numbers quickly and should be considered in most management efforts. Feral hogs typically travel in large family groups called sounders, and a large corral type trap can be effective in capturing the entire group.

Trap Designs

Most corral traps are constructed with 20' x 5' sheep/goat panels with 4" x 4" square mesh and steel T-posts. This type of panel will not allow smaller pigs to fit through the mesh or larger hogs to climb out of the trap. Shorter 4' panels may allow some trapped hogs to escape. If captured hogs will be sold for processing, these panels also reduce damage to the animals' nose, face, and mouth. As with box traps, many different door designs are available for corral traps. The best design for your management efforts depends upon available time, the number of hogs present, the degree of labor required, and material cost. Large sounders are seldom trapped using small traps, and hogs that escape or are not captured may become wary of encountering them in the future. While small traps do catch hogs of all sizes when limited space prevents using larger traps, they are not the most effective method for capturing a large number of hogs. For these situations, a large teardrop-shaped trap is best. This design also serves as a chute for loading hogs onto a trailer if they will be sold for processing (Fig. 1).

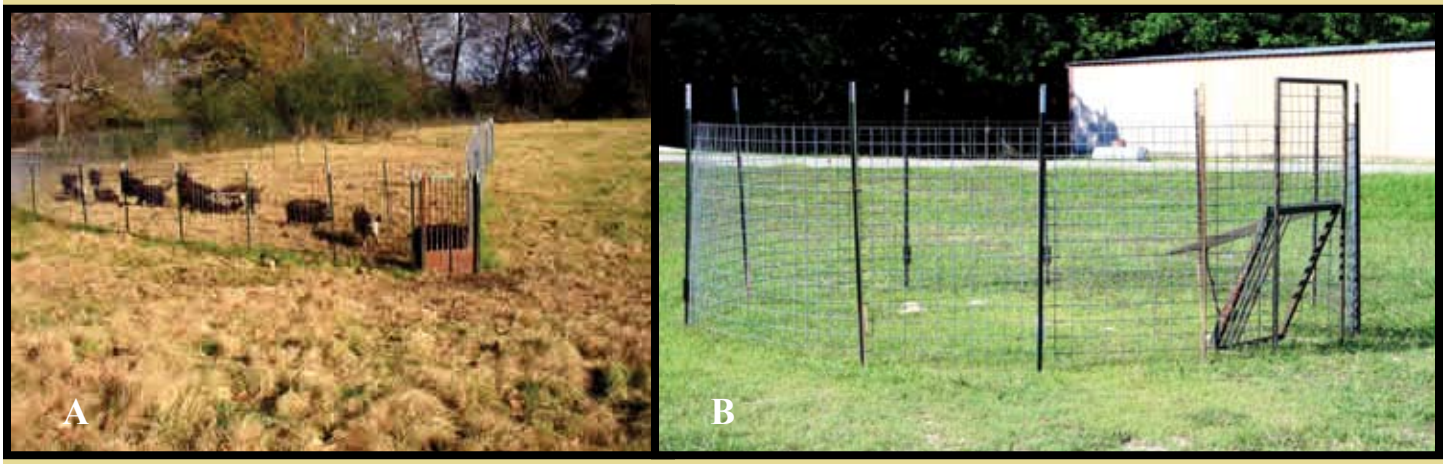

Figure 1. A large teardrop-shaped corral trap is effective for capturing a large number of hogs (A). Traps vary in size and shape, and occasionally a smaller round shape is preferred (B).

Corral traps are very versatile, and their use can be adjusted depending on the situation. Some designs do not require a gate or door (Fig. 2). These designs function similar to a minnow trap used to capture fishing bait, but they are not very effective in catching trap-shy hogs. Animals that are not captured may become wary of such traps in the future. In addition, loading captured hogs onto a trailer is more difficult than with other layouts.

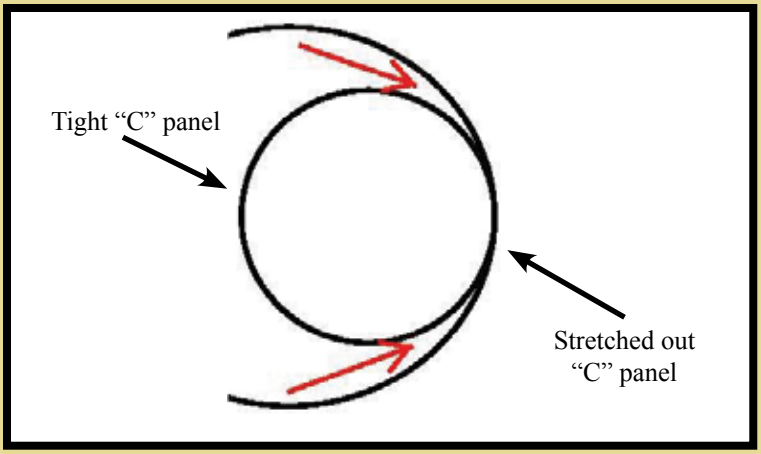

Figure 2. Two panels and a minimum number of T-posts can be used to construct a simple yet functional corral trap that does not require a gate.

This trap consists of two panels, each at least 16’ x 5’ with 4” x 4” or smaller mesh, and eight T-posts. One panel forms the shape of a stretched out “C”. The other panel forms a tight “C” with the ends touching the stretched “C” panel. T-posts are driven around the outside of the panels for extra support. A T-post should also be placed at each end where the panels touch, wired only at the top of the tight “C” panel. This configuration forms a chute on each side. The trap interior and both chutes are baited. As hogs try to get the bait inside the trap, the bottom of the tight “C” panel is pushed in, allowing access to the trap interior. Once inside, hogs find themselves in a circle and are unable to push out of the entrance due to the resistance exerted by the outside panel. This trap type is useful and extremely variable, as design is limited only by imagination and creativity. A number of modifications of this design, including the figure-6 and heart-shaped or Wexford traps (Fig. 3), have been implemented with success.

Figure 3. Heart-shaped or Wexford trap. The number of T-posts used depends on trap size and configuration (A). As hogs gather in the chute, they will push their way inside the trap (B).

Trap Placement and Construction

Using sheep/goat panels (4” x 4” mesh, 5’ high), set the trap upwind of an area frequented by hogs. Ideal locations include creeks, ponds, and other watering locations, particularly if these are near bedding or feeding areas. Hog trails linking these areas are excellent trap sites. If captured hogs will be sold to a processor, pick an area accessible to a truck and trailer in all weather conditions. Traps should be supported every 4’ by T-posts and should not have gaps along the bottom allowing hogs to escape. Avoid corners in the trap design, because hogs tend to pile into the corner and escape over the top of the panel. The trap interior does not have to be completely clear, as brush or trees inside the trap will provide camouflage for the trap and shade for captured animals. Design traps large enough for hogs to back away as you approach the trap. Larger traps tend to reduce panic.

Most corral traps generally are composed of the same materials. The following were used to construct the trap in Figures 4-6: A) lifting head gate, B) 13 x 6' T-posts, C) 4 x 16' x 52" panels, D) roll of tie wire, E) T-post driver, F) lineman's pliers or fencing tool, G) 4' two-by-four, H) 4" hook and eye latch, and I) a warning sign explaining trap safety. Start by setting the head gate (Fig. 4). A lifting gate is pictured. Most head gate/door designs are secured with steel T-posts on each side of the entrance attached to the gate with doubled bailing wire to provide additional strength. When driving T-posts, be sure they fit securely against the side of the head gate.

Figure 4. Use steel T-posts to secure a head gate (A). Make sure the head gate fits snugly against the T-posts using a doubled strand of baling wire (B).

Once the head gate is in place, use the panels to form the desired shape of the trap. Trap size, shape, and number of T-posts are dependent upon the number of panels used and whether the trap location is in the open or a wooded area. Secure panels to the head gate T-posts with doubled wire (Fig. 5A). Next, secure the remaining panels to one another. Be sure to overlap the panels at least 6-8" when tying them together. For most panels, this overlap will be one or two mesh squares (Fig. 5B). Attach the panels as securely as possible using doubled baling wire and/or hog rings. Hog rings and pliers can be purchased at your local hardware store.

Figure 5. Panel secured to a head gate T-post with doubled wire (A). Remaining panels are attached to one another. It is very important to overlap the ends of the panels (B).

For most corral traps, it is easier to attach all of the panels to one another prior to driving the T-posts. Once all panels are in place and secured, the trap can be shaped by pulling the panels to their desired location (Fig. 6). If the trap is in a wooded area, trees are often used for support.

Figure 6. An extra pair of hands is helpful when attaching panels. One person holds the panels in place while the other secures them (A). After all panels are secured, the panels are pulled to their desired location (B).

Once the trap is in the desired shape and location, use T-posts to anchor the trap (Fig. 7). T-posts should be spaced approximately 4' apart. Feral hogs are extremely strong and will test the trap when captured. Do not assume that the trap can be overbuilt. A captured hog can do serious damage to even the sturdiest of traps, and those made of weaker materials may allow hogs to escape altogether. Always make traps as strong as possible.

Figure 7. Two different sized corral traps secured with T-posts. Notice both traps are located in wooded areas, providing both concealment and shade.

Trap Doors and Trigger Mechanisms

In most cases, the appropriate trigger mechanism will depend upon the door selected for the trap. Most corral traps are built with saloon-type gates, drop gates, or lifting rooter gates (Fig. 8). An advantage to the saloon-type and rooter-type doors is that they can be set in an open position using a prop, such as a two-by-four or a stick. A hook and eye latch can also be used to hold open the trap door until it is triggered. This approach was utilized in the example above. After the first animals are captured, additional hogs can enter the trap by pushing their way in. Once captured, these door types will continue to catch hogs while not allowing those already captured to escape. When designing a corral trap, consider sharing gates with your neighbor. Since the gate does not need to be in place until the trap is set, a little planning and coordination can help cut material cost and build on the efforts of others to increase effectiveness.

Figure 8. Saloon-type doors require springs for closure (A). Lifting doors can be set in an open position, and once triggered, additional hogs can push their way inside the trap. This model is a lifting gate modified to act as a drop gate on initial capture. After triggering, the gate will close but permit additional hogs to enter (B).

For large corral traps, the trigger should be placed at the back of the trap, away from the door. This allows many hogs to enter the trap prior to door closure. Most trap triggers are made with wire. Some individuals use picture framing wire, as it is durable enough to spring the trap but will break if a hog becomes entangled. The wire is attached to a two-by-four or other prop mechanism on the trap door and is run to the back of the trap, where bait is placed in a hole or scattered on the ground (Fig. 9). T-posts or trees, are used to support the wire from the trap door to the back of the trap. Construct wire eyelets and attach them to the T-posts or trees. As hogs root for the for bait, the wire is stretched and the prop is pulled out, triggering door closure.

Figure 9. A board is used as a prop on a saloon type door (A). T-posts guide the wire from the prop to the back of the trap (B). The wire is then attached to another wire at the trigger (C). As hogs feed on the bait, the wire is stretched, and the prop pulls from the door. (Photos provided by Greg Pleasant)

Pre-baiting

Pre-baiting is critical in the use of all feral hog traps. Trapping is a process, not an event, and pre-baiting is necessary to attract animals and accustom them to entering the trap itself. Bait should first be placed around the gate and within the trap interior. Continue pre-baiting until feral hogs are consistently feeding on the bait and entering the trap. Finally, before setting the trap, place bait all the way to the trigger at the back of the trap. However, do not place bait directly on the tripwire, as this may cause the gate to be triggered before animals reach the back of the trap, preventing the capture of some animals.

Corral Trap Advantages

- Extremely effective in capturing large groups of hogs.
- If a deer is captured, large, open traps allow escape.
- Large size and round shape minimize damage to hogs.
- Can be placed in key areas that hogs will return to in the future.

Corral Trap Disadvantages

- Materials can be expensive and construction time-consuming.
- Not easily disassembled and moved.
- Pre-baiting can be time-consuming and expensive.

Trapping Tips

- Place traps on or next to existing feral hog trails.
- Coordinate with your neighbors to share trap gates.
- Always make traps as strong as possible.
- Camouflage traps if dealing with trap-shy hogs.
- A game camera can help identify the number of hogs and other species entering the trap and suggest the optimal time to set the trap.
- Pre-bait traps (with the door open), and once hogs are routinely entering the trap, set it.
- Do not put bait outside the traps; make hogs enter the trap in order to get the bait.
- Souring corn in water will help avoid attracting non-target animals, such as deer.
- Alternate bait types if necessary.
- If possible, check traps from a distance. Avoid leaving any human scent in the area, especially if you are dealing with trap-shy hogs.
- Check traps regularly. Daily inspections are recommended in hot weather.
- Install a visible warning sign that explains trap safety.
- Be persistent. Trapping hogs is a process.

Additional Considerations

Trap placement is critical when determining the size of a corral trap. Large traps are often considered more permanent, and they are typically placed in areas where hogs will return in the future, such as creeks or drainages used as travel corridors. In most cases, corral traps are within floodplains. Because of this, be sure to place the trap in an area that will minimize damage by rising floodwaters.

The Texas Animal Health Commission regulates the holding and transportation of feral hogs from the property where they were captured. Know and understand appropriate regulations if you plan to transport captured hogs to a holding facility or to slaughter. More information on these regulations can be found online at **http://www.tahc.state.tx.us/animal_health/swine/swine.html**.

Corral traps are extremely effective in managing feral hog numbers, especially when used in conjunction with other control methods. Though they require a higher level of effort to install and maintain, they can effectively capture large numbers of hogs at a time.

Publication date: September 2009. This publication was developed with funding support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through a Clean Water Act §319(h) Nonpoint Source grant administered by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and from the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Integrated Water Quality Program. The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination in all their programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.