

Your Side of the fence



Summer 2013

A Publication of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

Volume 13, Number 1

Feral Hog Trapping 101

By John Rempe, wildlife biologist



So you have feral hogs, now what do you do? Hunting feral hogs can be fun and can help

lower the numbers; however, it is not the long-term answer to removing large numbers out of the population. Trapping on the other hand is the most effective and efficient way to remove larger numbers of hogs in all types of terrain. Traps can be used to catch a single hog or a larger group of hogs consisting of sows and their young. This larger group is referred to as a sounder.

There are a number of different trap designs that can be used. A person can use the simplest trap or get more creative with an elaborate design. First, decide if you want the trap to be portable or stationary, which determines the design and size of the trap that will be used. Traps can range from being very affordable to very expensive; it all depends on a landowner's budget. There are also manufactured traps that a person can purchase or they can get a design and build the trap.

Another topic of discussion when it comes to trapping feral hogs is the type of door. There is the drop style or guillotine door; sometimes called the single catch door. There is also the rooster style door or butterfly-style door; sometime called the multi-catch door. The following link has the different types of doors and pictures: <http://wildpiginfo.msstate.edu/trap-doors-wild-hogs.html>.

There are three different traps used for feral hogs; box traps, cage traps and corral traps, all of which have their pros and cons. Cage traps and box traps are fully enclosed and can prevent escape of feral hogs but also non-target species such as deer and turkeys. One of the limiting factors with these two types of traps is it limits the number of feral hogs caught, however they are easier to move to new locations. Corral traps on the other hand have open tops and require more effort to set up in new locations; however, they can trap larger numbers of feral hogs at a time. The following link provides additional information on each type of trap: <http://wildpiginfo.msstate.edu/types-traps-feral-pigs.html>.

A wide variety of bait can be used to attract feral hogs. Dry or fermented grains such as corn,

wheat and other small grains can be used. If grains are fermented, they are less likely to attract non-target species such as deer and turkeys. Commercial scents or attractants can also be used, but can get very expensive for long-term trapping efforts. It is best to use a bait that is locally available, but don't hesitate to experiment with other baits because different baits can entice feral hogs that may have become trap shy. Other techniques can be found at <http://wildpiginfo.msstate.edu/bait-wild-pig-traps.html>.



Use bait that is locally available to trap feral hogs. Photo by Russell Graves.

Oklahoma Department of Wildlife
Conservation Mission Statement:

Managing Oklahoma's wildlife resources and habitat to provide scientific, educational, aesthetic, economic, and recreational benefits for present and future generations of hunters, anglers, and others who appreciate wildlife.

ODWC Landowner Assistance Programs:
Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP); Technical Assistance Program
RosaLee Walker:(918) 297-0153
Doug Schoeling:.....(405) 590-2584

Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP)
Erik Bartholomew(405) 396-2503

Oklahoma Wildscape Certification Program
Melynda Hickman (405) 424-0099

Streams Management
NE Region-Jim Burroughs (918) 683-1031
SE Region-Don Groom (918) 297-0153
W Region-Buck Ray:(405) 424-6062

Farm Pond Technical Assistance; Farm Pond Fish Stocking Program
NW Region-John Stahl (580) 474-2668
SW Region-Larry Cofer (580) 529-2795
NE Region-Josh Johnston (918) 346-3220
EC Region-Jim Burroughs(918) 683-1031
SE Region-Don Groom(918) 297-0153
SC Region-Matt Mauck(580) 924-4087
C Region-Keith Thomas(405) 325-7288

ODWC Contacts
Wildlife Division (405) 521-2739
Fisheries Division(405) 521-3721
Law Enforcement(405) 521-3719
Operation Game Thief 1-800-522-8039
Information & Education (405) 521-3855
License Section(405) 521-3852
Website wildlifedepartment.com

Your Side of the Fence is published three times a year for those enrolled in the ODWC's landowner assistance programs. Articles may be reprinted with permission from the editors:

Rachel Bradley.....(405) 522-3087
info@odwc.state.ok.us

or

Doug Schoeling(405) 590-2584
schoelngd@pdi.net

This program receives Federal assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and thus prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, age and sex (gender), pursuant to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1990. To request an accommodation or informational material in an alternative format, please contact the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation by phone at (405) 521-3855. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or service, please contact: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, Attention: Civil Rights Coordinator for Public Access, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, Virginia 22203.

Feral hogs can be trapped anytime of the year. The winter and early spring can be quite productive because there is less native food available making bait easier to find. During the fall, if you have areas that contain a large number of oaks with acorns, it is best to put the bait away until the acorns or other food sources are depleted. During the summer, a good time to catch feral hogs is after wheat, corn or hay crops have been harvested since food sources have been removed. However, it is important to check the trap at least twice daily during the summer. Non-target species that are accidentally captured can develop heat stress, which can be fatal.

The type of trap that I have used the most and prefer is the corral type trap. It is simple to build and can be adjusted to be as big or small for the selected trap site. I used 4"x4" wire panels 16' long and 5" tall, 6 1/2' steel post and wire to attach panels and steel post together. The smallest trap takes three wire panels and 15 steel posts (unless trees are available to attach panels); this design will make a 12' diameter trap (If a larger trap is needed then add an additional three steel post per panel). Construction is simple; tie all wire panels together in order to overlap each panel by 8". Then, stand the panels up into the shape of the number six so there are no corners (below), place a steel post every three feet to provide stability to the trap. To create the door, allow the starting panel to stick out at least three feet past the catch pen to create a funnel effect. The end of the last panel will act as a rooster style door; this will need to be bent so smaller hogs can push or root the door open. The door should to be raised off the ground about an inch and the end of the panel bent back so it will not catch on the wall of the other panel. The finished trap should look like the number six with a flap at the door.

It is best to wire the door open to prevent it from closing the first few days after the trap has been constructed and continue to bait the trap. Let the hogs get use to going in and out of the trap for a few days.



There are a number of feral hog traps in a variety of price ranges. There are manufactured traps for purchase, or a landowner can build one using a design. Photo by John Rempe.

Feral Hog Trapping 101: Key Points to Remember

By John Rempe, wildlife biologist

Remember to keep plenty of bait in the trap; if you run out of bait the hogs will leave the site. After a few days of heavy use on the bait; then it's time to set the trap door. Unwire the door to allow the door to close, then put a small stick in the door to hold it open about six inches; creating a hole for the first hog to find. When the first hog goes into the trap the stick will fall away and the door will close behind, the other hogs will push the door open to get into the trap with the first hog.

The next day, cautiously approach the trap. Occasionally, there may be one or two hogs that did not go into the trap. Be aware and always approach your trap with caution.

The most important thing to remember about feral hogs is that they are very intelligent animals. They have learned to avoid hunters and traps for years. Anyone can set up a trap and catch a few feral hogs; the trick is to catch them all. ■



Feral hog track. Check tracks near your trap regularly to see what is approaching the bait. Photo by wildlifedepartment.com.

Key points:

- Choose a site that can be easily accessed.
- Bait the feral hogs into site first.
- Wire panels together, overlap at least eight inches on each panel and then set the steel post.
- Make sure to raise door off of the ground about one inch and bend the end that touches the cage so it does not hang up.
- Leave trap open a few days and continue to bait.
- After a couple of days of heavy use then set the trap door, use a six inch stick to prop the door open.
- Be cautious when checking trap, all of the feral pigs may not be in the trap.
- Dispose of feral hog properly.
- To find transport rules and permits go to the following web site: <http://www.oda.state.ok.us/ais/feralswine.htm>

Material list:

- 3 4"x4" wire panel 16' long 5' feet tall (This size panel will help prevent escape of adult hogs and piglets)
- 15 6 ½' steel posts
- 1 6" stick
- Wire to tie panels to steel post

This material list is for the smallest size trap; panels and steel post can be added to make trap larger. Total cost is under \$200.

The Wet/Dry Cycle: Understanding Wetland Function

By Josh Richardson, migratory bird biologist



Summer is here and most folks have traded their hunting gear for fishing poles and coolers. Waterfowlers are a different sort, though. Most of our thoughts have started to turn toward the upcoming season and writing a checklist of things to do in preparation; shoot some clays, fix up the

boat, touch up the decoys, work the dog, drain the wetlands....Wait, do what? Yes, you read that correctly. As I write this article much of Oklahoma is experiencing a wetter-than-normal spring. As most of you read this though, rainfall may be a distant memory and the thought of actively draining water sounds as appetizing as a coot sandwich. You may question how in the world can that be good for your waterfowl season?

Wetlands support a high diversity of animal and plant life. However, most people only think wetlands are “functional” when they have water. If the wetland goes dry, they think, something must be broken or it isn’t a very good wetland. Actually, the opposite is true. Functional wetlands have to dry up occasionally. Wetlands that do not dry up are generally called lakes. Drying out does not have to mean cracks in the ground, but rather that the majority of standing water has been removed. Wetlands technically have to go through drying cycles, making them more beneficial. Think about the wetlands where you usually see the highest numbers of waterfowl. It is likely that those wetlands have a fairly robust plant community that

provides food and cover for waterfowl.

Dry cycles are the key to getting those plants to grow in a wetland. Most seed producing plants need three elements in order to germinate: water, heat and oxygen. In order for the seeds to receive the heat, and especially the oxygen, needed to germinate, the standing water must be removed. Many times during our hot, dry summers, this is a natural occurrence. Runoff and inflows are reduced while evaporation increases, resulting in a net loss of water, slowly drying

out a wetland (or the margins of larger ponds and lakes).



Teal Ridge wetland in Stillwater. Photo by wildlifedepartment.com.

Several years ago, the phrase “moist-soil management” (MSM) came into vogue. To that point, much wetland management focused on very specific dates and water levels for flooding or draining. In some cases, some attempted to plant annual crops in the dried

wetlands to increase their attractiveness to waterfowl. The basis behind MSM is to try to mimic natural cycles, and thus reap the benefits of the diversity of native plant communities that naturally come about. While it is a little more time intensive, it generally requires less physical inputs while providing the same or increased benefits to waterfowl and other shorebirds. No planting is required; if the site has any previous history of wetness, seeds already present in the seed bank are often just waiting for the right conditions to germinate. One downside to MSM is that some native plants are not very beneficial to waterfowl, and if not carefully watched or manipulated, wetlands can be dominated by these undesirable plants. Through studying natural wetlands (and through some trail and

error), biologists found that two factors have a significant influence on the desirability of plants that will germinate: the rate at which the wetland dries and the time in the growing season a wetland is dried.

So how can you use MSM on your wetland? Generally a slow drop (1 to 6 inches per week depending upon topography in your wetland) in water level in early to mid-summer produces good results. To accomplish this, you need to have some sort of structure to control the release of water. It can be as fancy as a custom made, full-round riser with flash boards, as common as a screwgate, or as simple as a pipe with a cap or plug, so you can let water out when you want and then stop it when you want. Once plants have germinated, good plant identification skills (or at least a good field guide) can really save a lot of work down the road.

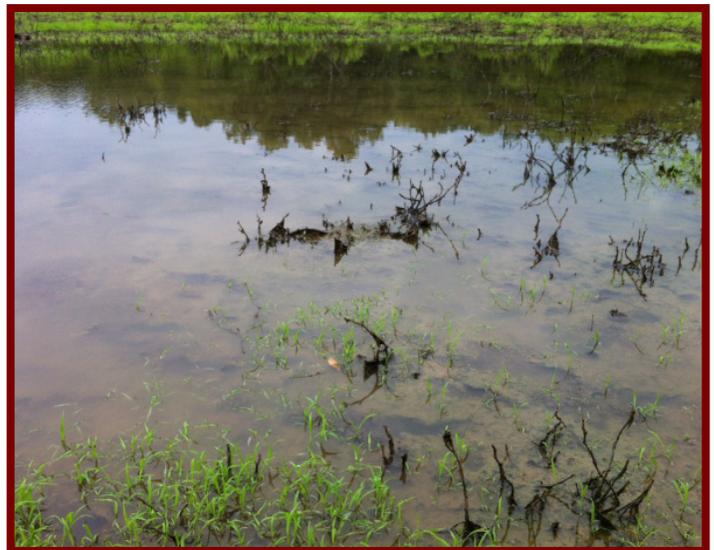
Observing the composition of the plant community, biologists or managers (like yourselves) can determine whether there are too many undesirable plants present and if additional control is needed. If a water source is available, or if late spring rains are falling, the wetland can be shallowly flooded to kill the undesirable seedlings, then left to dry to allow for a second round of germination. Herbicides or disturbance, like shallow disking, are also more effective while plants are small. Once plants are a few inches tall and you are satisfied with what is present, many moist soil plants may benefit by holding water back in the wetland. This will help irrigate the plants and will also keep additional plants from sprouting. This very shallow water is also beneficial to many shorebirds that migrate earlier through the state, before most waterfowl begin to arrive. Mowing can also be a beneficial tool to help control many types of vegetation, particularly if undesirable vegetation is taller and “shading out” more desirable types of moist soil plants. Often, if desirable grasses are present but small, mowing will open up the vegetation canopy and allow them to become more dominant and flourish.

Toward the end of the growing season, if the vegetation is very thick, create some openings and trails with a brushhog or mower before preparing for fall flooding. This allows ducks a place to land and an easier way to swim through the wetland, while still reserving plenty of food and cover. Unfortunately, the final part of the plan is out of most managers’ hands. Water is needed to refill those prepared wetlands. Fortunately we often receive some

amount of rainfall by early to mid fall, which corresponds well to the arrival of the eagerly awaited birds.

If you do not have water control capabilities on your wetland or lake, or if the summer is too far along for native plants to germinate or mature, or the seed bank is sterile, there is another option available. In situations like this, Japanese millet is a good choice. Available at many seed stores, Japanese millet is a close relative to barnyard grass, a desirable native plant for waterfowl. With a relatively short maturity date, millet can be planted as late as mid-August to early September and still provide beneficial habitat for waterfowl. In order for millet to be successful, there is a narrow range of conditions for planting. Again, the three requirements for germination are water, oxygen and heat. Japanese millet is seeded on exposed mudflats, so oxygen and heat are readily available; moisture keeps most from planting millet. Japanese millet should be broadcast at a rate of 15-20 lbs/ac while the soil is still fully saturated, or even when there is still 1/8-1/4” of water left. Like the native plants, millet can withstand shallow flooding after it has established. Multiple seedings are the most successful in establishing millet. Broadcast the seed on the wettest zones based on evaporation/artificial drawdown of your wetland over a period of a few days/weeks.

As summer progresses and you see your favorite duck hole slowly getting drier and drier, take heart, for it is just nature’s way of rejuvenating this system and ensuring that it remains a productive location for both waterfowl and hunters to enjoy. ■



Shallow flooded millet. Overtopping the plant for more than a couple days will kill it, as with other wetland plants. Photo by Josh Richardson.

New: Oklahoma Quail Habitat Guide

By Michael Bergin, information and education specialist



Landowners and wildlife managers looking to benefit bobwhite quail have a new resource available from

the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. The new “Oklahoma Quail Habitat Guide” is free and includes nearly 50 pages of information on managing land for maximum quail benefit.

“The new ‘Quail Habitat Guide’ takes a comprehensive look at the practical yet important steps landowners can take to improve quail habitat on their property,” said Jena Donnell, quail habitat biologist for the Department and co-editor of the new guide. “In developing this guide, we tried to outline the very best tools and tips for improving quail habitat, and that’s the first step to attracting birds.”

The guide explores the impacts of development on wildlife management and specifically details the requirements for achieving good quail habitat. With chapters covering a range of topics, landowners can learn when, where and how to use specific management tools such as prescribed burning, grazing and brush management.

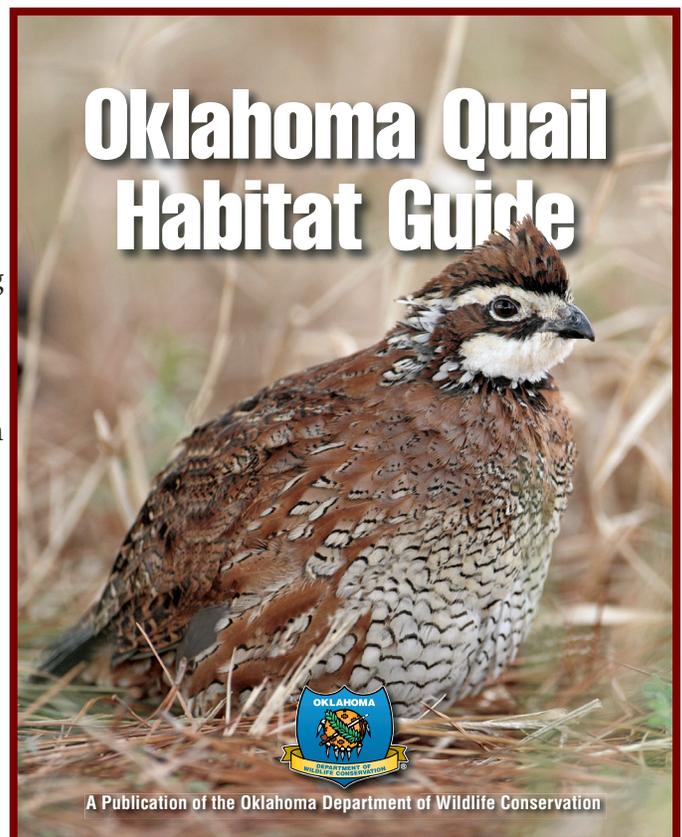
It is pertinent to landowners all over Oklahoma - not just those whose land falls in the traditional hunting hotspots of western Oklahoma. The dynamics of managing grasslands, timberlands and agricultural lands are each covered in detail, and examples of management efforts taking place on the Wildlife Department’s wildlife management areas are provided.

The guide will tell landowners how to monitor changes on their property over time, as well as how to conduct a quail count on their property. The guide also contains a detailed natural history on quail ecology, and numerous articles on good and bad plants for quail, weather impacts on upland birds, studies on pen-reared birds, supplemental feeding and more.

“About ninety-seven percent of the land in Oklahoma is under private ownership, so it’s crucial that landowners partner with the Wildlife Department and sportsmen to make sure this great bird has a rich future in Oklahoma,” Donnell said.

“If the habitat isn’t right, then you’ll see fewer and fewer birds. If you get the habitat right, however, there is a chance that quail will use it. But conservation starts with habitat.”

The guides are free and can be requested by emailing info@odwc.state.ok.us. This guide was originally featured in *Outdoor Oklahoma* magazine, the official magazine of the Wildlife Department. Subscriptions are \$10 for one year, \$18 for two years or \$25 for three years. Subscriptions can be ordered by calling 1-800-777-0019. ■



This Quail Habitat Guide can help landowners monitor changes on their property over time and more.

Landowner Spotlight

Waitin' on a Whistle

By Jena Donnell, quail habitat biologist



Frank Cartmell has been “waitin’ on a whistle” since purchasing his property in Pontotoc County. Frank’s

childhood memories are filled with exciting quail hunts. That tradition continued into adulthood with a lease in southwest Oklahoma. But now—like many other Oklahoma landowners—he would be happy just hearing the two-note “bob-white” whistle.

In an effort to improve quail numbers on his 450-acre property, Frank researched the quail decline in Oklahoma and realized habitat management was his best option. After contacting his local NRCS office, he enrolled in the Quail Habitat Restoration Initiative, a federal cost share assistance program designed to help producers improve quail habitat. Work began in 2009, and for the last three years, Frank and his family have spent countless hours toiling in the name of quail.

The first step was to hire dozers to reduce the hardwood canopy along ridges and upland sites. After the initial thinning, the Cartmell family used chainsaws to half-cut a number of the remaining trees. This combination of brush

management resulted in open woodland with a variety of native grasses and forbs establishing the understory.

Frank and family began work on firebreaks. Improving pasture roads and clearing timber around the property boundary so fire equipment could access the entire area. This took much work, but was easier than removing the eastern red cedar seedlings and 30-foot tall green briar growing next to the firebreaks.

To prepare for the impending prescribed burn, Frank attended the Noble Foundation’s prescribed burning workshop, joined the Pontotoc Ridge Prescribed Burn Association and consulted with staff from The Nature Conservancy. The first scheduled burn was completed in 2011. Since, Frank has seen the benefits first-hand. The fire killed the remaining eastern red cedar seedlings and encouraged a multitude of native forbs. Shortly after the burn, he was amazed at the response from white-tailed deer.

“Who needs a food plot? Just burn and the deer will come!” Frank stated.

Needless to say, Frank continued his burn rotation with plans to burn the thinned timber in the winters.

Spring 2011 burn killed these eastern red cedar seedlings and encouraged a number of forbs. Three years after habitat work started, Frank’s efforts paid off. Last summer, Frank and his son were greeted with several “bob-white” quail whistles. Later, while maintaining firebreaks, Frank saw a male bobwhite—the first he’s seen on his property. With hard work and a little patience, Frank Cartmell enjoys the fruits of his labor, and is no longer “waitin.” ■



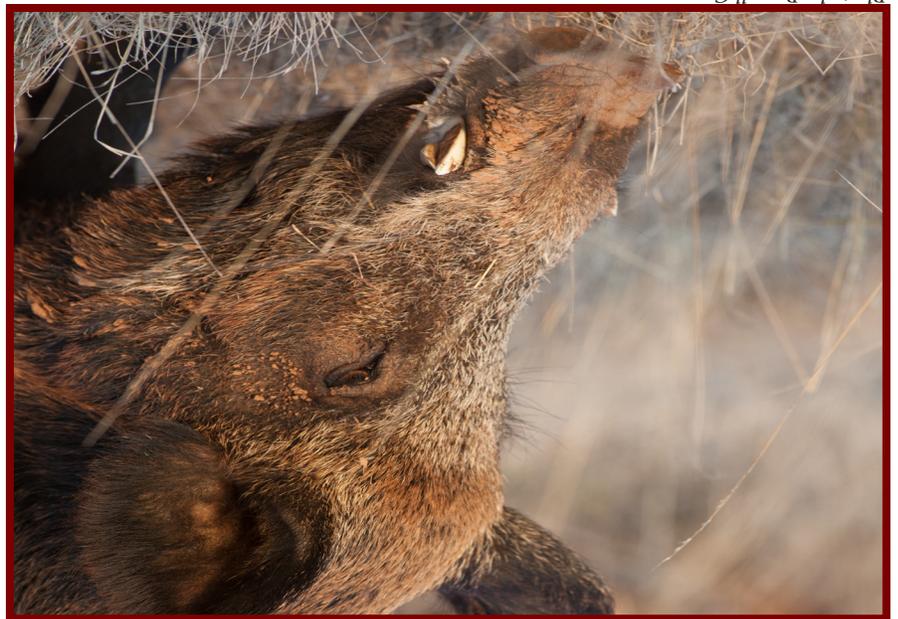
Habitat management is the best option for improving quail numbers on private property. Photo by Jena Donnell.



Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
 P.O. Box 53465
 Oklahoma City, OK 73105

NON PROFIT
 ORGANIZATION
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 NORMAN, OK
 PERMIT NO.
 35

Photo by Russell Graves.



What's Inside

Page 1 Feral Hog Trapping 101

Page 4 The Wet/Dry Cycle:
 Understanding Wetland Function

Page 6 New: Oklahoma Quail Habitat
 Guide

Page 7 Waitin' on a Whistle



Your Side of the fence

