



Feral hog damage topic of workshop

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Controlling the feral hog epidemic will probably require chemical control, an LSU AgCenter researcher said at a workshop on May 31.

LSU AgCenter animal scientist Glen Gentry said hunting and trapping hogs is inefficient, and a large-scale contraceptive strategy has yet to be found.

Meanwhile, he said, the wild pig population continues to increase. "The expansion of the pig population across the United States is not done."

LSU AgCenter economist Shaun Tanger estimated the damage and losses from pigs on Louisiana agriculture at \$74 million a year, with sugarcane and rice farmers reporting the highest damage totals.

Just to keep the pig population at the current level, Gentry said, 70-75 percent of the current population would have to be eliminated.

Gentry said the AgCenter continues research into the use of sodium nitrite. The chemical, used as a food preservative, is lethal to pigs but it rapidly decomposes when exposed to air or water.

Different encapsulation materials are being tested, he said, that would prevent decomposition of sodium nitrite until pigs eat bait laced with the chemical. "I believe that is what is holding us up right now."



Researchers at the Bob R. Jones-Idlewild Research Station in Clinton are conducting studies on feral hogs to determine the most efficient ways to control them using poisonous baits. Photo by Olivia McClure

Gentry said research has shown pigs are attracted to dried fish that can be used as bait, and the use of another invasive species, Asian carp, is being tested as bait. "Maybe we can kill two birds with one stone."

He said getting the bait only to pigs is a challenge though, because other animals could be attracted to the material. He said some feeders have been invented that could prevent the bait from being eaten by other species.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has issued an experimental use permit for testing warfarin or rat poison on pigs, he said. That research is being conducted by Genesis Laboratories in Colorado.

Gentry said he is certain that a chemical will be approved to control hogs, but it will be sold as a restricted use pesticide. "It won't be sold like rat poison."

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry veterinarian Dr. Jonathan Roberts said new feral swine regulations restrict where wild hogs can be relocated.

Relocation can only be done by authorized transporters, and wild hogs must be kept in a permitted facility. Roberts said hogs could be kept by individuals if the pens are approved by LDAF after an inspection.

Richard Vlosky, director of the LSU AgCenter Forestry Products Development Center, said a survey of farmers showed that half of the respondents had crop damage from pigs, and most disagreed that wild pigs are being managed effectively by state and federal agencies.