

Feral Swine Attractants: Use, Availability, Needs and Future Potential

The following highlights a study by Wildlife Services National Wildlife Research Center's Feral Swine Project.

Lethal control is the most common management strategy for reducing feral swine populations and often relies upon attracting feral swine to specific locations. Corn is commonly used for attracting and keeping feral swine at a site (Figure 1), but baiting with food is sometimes prohibited under state wildlife laws. Furthermore, feral swine attraction to a bait varies with local and seasonal abundance of alternative foods, human activity, and acceptance of novel food sources and devices. Further exploration and testing of alternative baits and additives (Figure 2) helps to identify proven attractants for feral swine damage management.

Study Objectives

The objectives of this study include the following:

- Reviewing available information on alternative baits, lures, and attractants that could aid in feral swine lethal control or research
- Identifying knowledge gaps pertaining to existing feral swine attractants
- Identifying and testing potential alternative attractants against corn in a variety of settings

Methods

NWRC researchers conducted a literature review and compiled a summary of relevant information on feral swine attractants, recommendations for their use, and identified knowledge gaps.

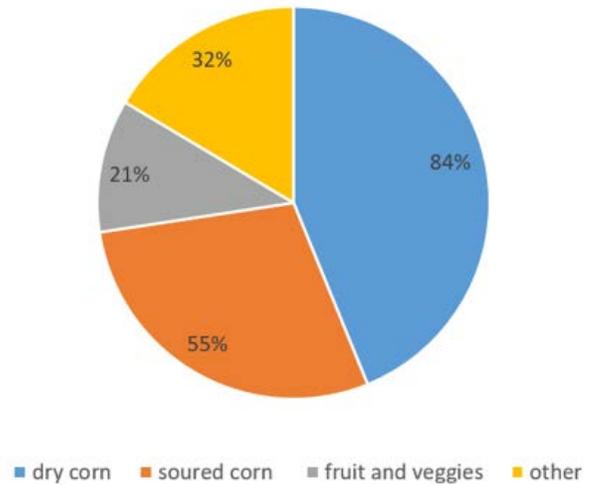


Figure 1. Discussions with 40 Wildlife Services field specialists noted the majority use corn as a feral swine attractant. Fruits and vegetables are commonly used alternatives especially on islands where corn may be scarce.

Key Findings

- A feral swine's most acute sense is their sense of smell. Their sense of taste is thought to be the most developed of all mammals. Thus, targeting both simultaneously may maximize success.
- Supplementing preferred food baits with a scent attractant or flavor enhancer may provide enough incentive to out-compete preferred natural or available foods.
- Feral swine are very social animals, thus attractants that use or mimic the scent of feral swine may increase feral swine attraction to a bait site.
- Whole-kernel corn is the most frequently used bait across the U.S. by Wildlife Services personnel.
- Currently, there are few successful stand-alone attractants or lures for use in areas with baiting restrictions. Furthermore, without a food bait present, there is little incentive for feral swine to remain at or return to a site.
- Several alternatives and additives to corn show promise, but focused comparisons are still needed in order to evaluate their effectiveness across seasons and regions.

What This Means For Management

- When selecting a bait site, pick areas with evidence of recent feral swine activity and avoid areas with abundant non-target activity in order to minimize non-target visitation.
- Identify foods already being sought by feral swine and use the same or similar items.
- Identify what feral swine are naturally eating and try to provide something more enticing. Otherwise, delay baiting efforts until the amount of natural foods declines or change locations to target alternate habitat, travel corridors, water sources, bedding areas, etc.

- Numerous commercial baits and attractants are available for feral swine (Figure 3). Some are the result of extensive tests in the field and may be effective while others are not.

Citation

Lavelle, M.J., Snow, N.P., Fischer, J.W., Halseth, J.M., VanNatta, E.H., VerCauteren, K.C., 2017. [Attractants for wild pigs: current use, availability, needs, and future potential. European Journal of Wildlife Research 63:86.](#) DOI.org/10.1007/s10344-017-1144-z.

Figure 2. Types of baits, lures and attractants for feral swine. Foods are frequently used as a stand-alone bait but can be used in conjunction with scents and flavors to improve attraction. Foods provide an incentive for feral swine to remain and revisit a site though their use can be restricted. Scents, auditory sound recordings, and visual lures have potential to draw feral swine to an area otherwise unexplored.

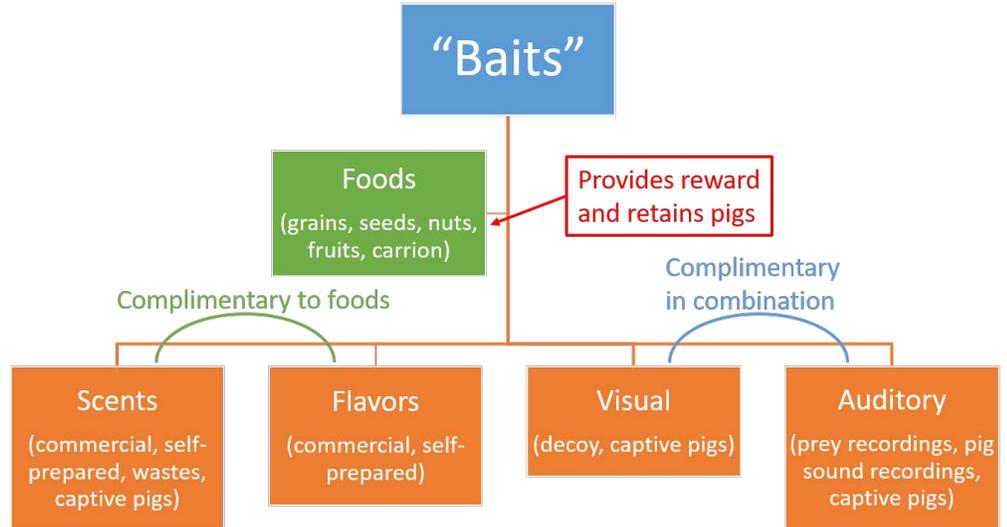


Figure 3. There are a variety of available food baits, commercial products, and novel ideas for attracting feral swine to a bait site.

