April 2011

The Sacramento District Review

4 Lost Lodge Rd, Cloudcroft, NM 88317 575-682-2551

Feral Hogs - A Serious Challenge to Future Resources

- Feral Hogs - a growing problem

- Kathy Wallace

-Mark Cadwallader

The term feral hog is used to describe true descendants of the Eurasian wild boar (commonly called Russian wild boar), domestic hogs that have been released or have escaped and returned to a wild state, or hybrids of these two. Feral hogs are the most abundant free-ranging exotic ungulates in the United States.

Nationwide, the expansion of feral hog populations represents a growing threat to our natural resources, both private and public. The looming threat will challenge resource managers to find new solutions across a multitude of land management agencies. New Mexico is one of many states facing this issue.

Over the past decade, the feral hog populations have increased significantly in many areas across New Mexico.

Only a few years ago on the Sacramento Ranger District feral hog reports were isolated to areas such as Monument, Jim Lewis, Dry Burnt, 3 Mile, 8 Mile, Perk Canyons, and in the Wright Spring area off Forest Service Road 90. Today, feral hog sightings have expanded to almost all areas of the District.

Feral hog females, or sows travel in groups with their offspring called sounders. Feral hog boars are relatively nomadic, only visiting sows within their home range for breeding purposes. Their home ranges can shift seasonally, depending on food, water, cover and hiding places.

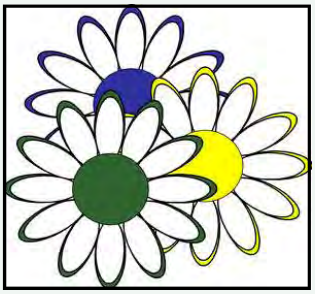
Resource damage caused by feral hogs represents a significant impact to National Forest lands.

Feral hogs are omnivorous, and are excellent at adapting to available food resources. In general, 40% or more of their diet consists of grasses, roots and other plant parts, while the remainder consists of carrion and a variety of invertebrates and vertebrates.

Feral hogs forage almost continuously because their simple stomach is not as efficient as a ruminant's multi-chambered digestive system. Since they eat a number of different things they are in direct competition with native wildlife for food and water.

It's spring fever. That is what the name of it is. And when you've got it, you want - oh, you don't quite know what it is you do want, but it just fairly makes your heart ache, you want it so!"

- Mark Twain



"April hath put a spirit of youth in everything"

- William Shakespeare

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Feral Hogs - A Serious Challenge to Future Resources Cont...

- Feral Hogs on the District

Feral hogs exhibit rooting behavior, which is a method of getting food, such as roots, earthworms or grubs.

Damage from rooting, trampling and compaction directly and indirectly impacts plant regeneration, plant community structure, soil properties, nutrient cycling and water infiltration. Rooting behavior also promotes the establishment and spread of nonnative plants. In addition, hogs pass nonnative invasive plant seeds through their feces, further contributing to the spread of these invasive plants.

Feral hogs also create wallows, which are depressions or pools of water or mud. Hogs wallow because of their inability to thermoregulate (keeping their body temperature within certain boundaries). Wallowing may also provide insect relief and a method of communicating reproductive signals. All of these activities result in ground disturbance that negatively affects ground cover and species diversity.

Feral hogs also eat eggs of ground nesting birds such as quail and turkey, salamanders, turtles, lizards, small mammals and vertebrates and invertebrates in riparian and other environments.

Feral hogs damage crops and rangeland forage. They are also predators of domestic livestock, including lambs, goat kids and calves. Frequently, when livestock predation occurs, feral hogs escape suspicion because people generally underestimate the hog's capabilities as a predator.

Feral hogs carry a number of parasites and diseases which are transmissible to livestock. Hogs also can have an impact on domestic water supplies. They are carriers of the top five waterborne pathogens for drinking water, including *E. coli, Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, *Cryptosporidium* and *Giardia.* Since feral hogs require a continual water supply, they tend to stay closer to riparian areas and other water sources.

Hunting feral hogs in New Mexico is legal all year and no license or habitat stamp is required because feral hogs are not classified as a game species. New Mexico Game and Fish does not regulate or manage the hunting of these species. If hunting on private land, please obtain written permission from the landowner first.

Slash Pit Schedule

The slash pit will be open on:

Sunday, April 3

Saturday, April 9

Hours of Operation:

9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

The Slash Pit is for private land owner use and not for commercial use. The pit schedule is based on how full it gets, when it is burned, weather conditions, time of year, and how long it takes for the pit to cool down after burning before new slash material can be added. This is done for public and Forest Service safety. As a reminder only natural forest vegetation slash is accepted in the slash pit. No paper, cardboard, cans, tires, or construction materials are allowed. For more information about the Slash Pit please visit the Sacramento Ranger District Office or call (575) 682-2551.

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What Is A Tree and How Does It Grow?

- White Fir Cones

- Kathy Wallace

A tree is defined by the Society of American Foresters as "a woody perennial, typically large and with a well-defined stem or stems, carrying a more or less definite crown". The majority of the trees on the Sacramento Ranger District are conifers, or cone bearing trees.

The conifer species present on the Sacramento Ranger District include ponderosa pine, white fir, Douglas-fir, southwestern white pine, piñon pine, oneseed and alligator juniper. Unlike deciduous trees, such as oaks and maples, conifers don't lose all of their needles every year, although they do lose some every fall.

Trees, like all plants are highly organized structures. Trees consist of leaves, roots and stems, each with its own function. The leaves (needles) function in the production of food. The roots function as support, as a means to absorb mineral nutrients and water and as a site for storage of food. The stems function as carriers of food from the needles to the roots, or water and nutrients from the roots to other parts of the trees, as a storage system for food, and as support for the needles.

Conifers reproduce by forming cones. In conifer trees, both male and female cones or strobili are on the same trees. Typically, female cones are found in the upper portion of the tree, and male cones, which produce pollen, are located on the lower portion of the tree. This is to help prevent the tree from pollinating itself, which enhances genetic variation among trees.

Most conifer trees form mature cones in one year. However, pine trees take two to three years to form mature cones. Conifer seeds depend on wind for dispersal, and the "wings" on the seed. Small animals and birds are also responsible for dispersal of seeds.

- Mixed Conifer – Douglas-Fir

Dry Forest Conditions

The Sacramento Ranger District would like to remind visitors that very dry conditions exist in the forest due to the lack of moisture this past winter. All District fire crews and engines have started work and are preparing for the upcoming fire season. Be extremely careful with campfires, trash fires, and other potential ignition sources. Please visit the Southwest Coordination Center, which provides fire information, logistics and predictive services at: http://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/.

Office Hours

The Sacramento Ranger District Office is located in the Village of Cloudcroft, at #4 Lost Lodge Road, one mile south of Highway 82 on Highway 130. We are open Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Closed Federal Holidays.