



Photo by John N. Felsher

Daniel Felsher shows the wild hog he shot. Feral hogs cause considerable habitat damage. Alabama sportsmen can shoot hogs all year long on private land and in conjunction with most other hunting seasons on public lands.

HOG WILD!

Sportsmen take advantage of expanding pig populations

BY JOHN N. FELSHER

Although pigs came to Alabama with the first Spanish explorers nearly 500 years ago, feral pig populations in the Cotton State remained concentrated primarily along the Tombigbee and Alabama river drainages and the southernmost parts of the state until about 30 years ago. With high reproduction rates and few natural predators, pigs spread to every county since then.

“Pigs are extremely prolific,” explained Matt Brock, the top swine biologist with the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division. “Under ideal conditions, sows can reach sexual maturity as early as six months and reproduce up to twice a

year. Generally, they have four to 10 piglets per litter, but average about six to eight. To control wild hog populations, people need to kill 70 percent of the population in an area annually just to maintain the status quo.”

Expanding hog populations can displace native animals like white-tailed deer and compete with them for food. Pigs eat almost anything they can find or catch. They tear up habitat with their rooting and destroy crops like corn, soybeans or peanuts. Therefore, many landowners want to get rid of them.

“Wild hogs are not native to Alabama or anywhere else in North America,” Brock admonished. “As a

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