

HOGS: Growing population is opportunity for hunters

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state wildlife agency, we want to improve native wildlife populations. Hogs probably affect deer and deer habitat most, but they can affect small ground-dwelling reptiles, mammals and birds as well. Hogs eat anything that nests on the ground so they are potential threats to those species. They eat quail and quail eggs, but there's also evidence that they consume turkey poults and eggs as well."

Some landowners hire hog control experts like Barry and Bart Estes with Alabama Hog Control (334-301-0179, www.alabamahogcontrol.com) to kill pigs. With a night-hunting permit, the Estes brothers use rifles equipped with thermal sights to shoot pigs at certain times. They also trap pigs by placing bait in large corral-like traps. Motion sensors send texts to a smart phone when pigs arrive. With smart phones connected to video cameras, the Estes can watch the trap. When the entire herd, or sounder, enters the trap, they can transmit an electronic code to close the gate.

"We want to catch the whole sound-



Photo by John N. Felsher

Josh Forbes and Kenny Belletty show off a feral pig they killed during a hunt near Theodore.

er in a single drop," Barry advised. "If we don't, the rest get wise to the trap. My personal record for a single drop is 51 pigs. I give a lot of pigs away to people who need the meat."

Sportsmen can also do their part in the pig war. Alabama allows hunters

to kill feral pigs without limit all year long on private land. Sportsmen can also kill hogs on many public properties when hunting other legal game. When hunting public land, like the Mobile-Tensaw Delta wildlife management areas, look for food sources such as acorns and swamp chestnuts. Also look for pig trails and wallows.

Many people shoot feral hogs if they see one while deer hunting. On private lands, properly licensed sportsmen can shoot feral hogs and deer over bait. Many people use spin feeders that fling corn or other tidbits in all directions at predetermined times. Pigs quickly learn to associate that whirring sound with food, so they come running when the spinner goes off.

Barry also suggests using a "pig pipe" to bring hogs into range. Take a length of PVC pipe, cap one end and drill holes into it big enough to barely let corn kernels out. Add a screw cap to the other end to enable a person to refill the pipe with more bait. Then, place the pipe in a likely area where pigs will find it.



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