

# Feral hogs

**What they are**

Feral hogs are descendants of European wild boars brought to North America and released into the wild, or domestic hogs that have escaped and turned feral. Both are a big problem.

**How to ID them**

Feral hogs range in size from 75 to more than 300 pounds. The snout is long and flat at the end. The hair is coarse with long bristles, generally black but can be gray, brown, or red. Hunters, hikers, landowners, and others should be on the lookout for rooting or digging in woods, crop fields, and near streams and springs.

Illustration by Liz Bradford



**Where they're found**

These destructive swine, which live in family groups called "sounders," have spread to 38 states and several Canadian provinces. Currently, the closest feral hogs to Montana are just a few miles from the state's border with Alberta north of the Sweet Grass Hills.

**How they spread**

Feral hogs, also known as wild pigs and wild swine, expand their range on their own. Additionally, they often escape after people illegally import them for game farms.

**Why we hate them**

In addition to eating and damaging crops, feral swine spread disease such as pseudo-rabies to livestock and wildlife, and destroy native plants by rooting in soil, digging up dirt like snorting rototillers. They also prey on nesting birds, small mammals, and deer fawns.

**How to control them**

Montana encourages people to report any wild pig sightings so that officials can quickly dispatch the animals. Sport hunting is not a control option. When hunted, sounders spread even more quickly, and other states have found that hunting creates advocacy groups that lobby for increased feral hog numbers. Report sightings to the state Squeal on Pigs hotline at 406-444-2976. ■

## THE MICRO MANAGER

*A quick look at concepts and terms commonly used in fisheries, wildlife, or state parks management.*

### “Heritage resources”

One of state land managers’ major responsibilities is preserving and interpreting archaeological and historical sites and objects, known as “heritage resources.”

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks manages more than 350 archaeological and historical sites at state parks, wildlife management areas, and fishing access sites. Roughly 60 percent are “pre-contact” archaeological sites (established before European exploration and settlement), such as the cliff at Madison Buffalo Jump State Park. The other 40 percent are “historic” sites (post-European contact), such as the ghost town at Elkhorn State Park. Many sites, like Travelers’ Rest and Medicine Rocks, have both.

Seven Montana state park sites are designated National Historic Landmarks: First Peoples Buffalo Jump, Travelers’ Rest, Banack, Missouri Headwaters, Pictograph Cave, Chief Plenty Coups, and Rosebud Battlefield.

In addition to historic buildings and other structures, FWP-managed heritage resources include landscape features noted by the Lewis and Clark Expedition, a historic trading post, historic campsites, and a battlefield. Pre-contact sites include campsites,



Hikers at Madison Buffalo Jump State Park

cave sites, pictograph and petroglyph sites, and buffalo jumps.

FWP’s Heritage Resources Program provides stewardship of these culturally significant places by conducting research, documenting sites and artifacts, collaborating with tribes, building local “Friends of” partnerships, preserving buildings, and protecting, monitoring, and interpreting the sites. ■