

WILD PIG


TRAPPING:

*if at first you
don't succeed!*

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It's no secret that wild hogs have taken up residence in many areas of Alabama. Our company owns approximately several hundred thousand acres in west Alabama. Some tracts have little to zero wild hog sign, a few are infested. We decided to concentrate our efforts on tracts experiencing the most issues. After a literature review and speaking with several individuals actively trapping hogs, we purchased a Jager Pro™ hog trapping system. For those that may not be familiar with this system, this trademarked system uses cellular technology to facilitate targeted trapping efforts remotely. Basically the Jager Pro™ system uses a M.I.N.E (Manually Initiated Nuisance Elimination) camera and gate setup that allows users to interact with the trap using your cell phone. There is also a remote control option with an effective range of 250 yards. Aside from the camera and gate, the remainder of the setup includes 16 ft. long metal fencing panels (60 inches tall), metal t-posts, t-post camera mount, and signal booster (if needed). The main objective for this type of system is entire sounder group removal. A sounder is simply a group of pigs made up of sows (typically related) and their piglets. Young males tend to disperse from the sounder around 16-18 months of age. One of the benefits of this system is that it allows the flexibility for users to manage camera settings and drop the gate without having to travel to the site. Personally, I think it's outstanding to have the ability to drop the gate on a sounder group from the comforts of my recliner using my cell phone. With our new tools now in hand, it was time to decide where to use them.



Jed Dezelle showing how some innovative camouflage can encourage wary pigs to enter the trap.

Summer 2014

We first identified an area where we had a large population of wild pigs along with customers looking for help. Since this technology utilizes cellular technology, a SIM card with a data plan is required. The key in this process is finding someone who can setup the unlimited data plan and format the card properly (Jager Pro™ has some very good instructional videos outlining the best process). This sounds like a simple thing to do, however it can become the most challenging. We have also learned that without warning the cellular carrier may change your data plan and the camera will suddenly stop sending images. If we experience a camera that is not functioning properly, the SIM card is the first item we confirm is working properly. The new cameras now no longer use SIM cards, but use a data service plan that operates on a computer server. Data is pre-paid and this should be a more user friendly system.

With the camera setup and ready to go, we were now ready to go catch hogs (*so we thought*). We found a site with some fresh hog signs and decided to build the trap there. With this being our first time setting the trap up, it took us a little more than two hours. Once everything was set up and baited, we turned the camera on and waited for the pictures to start rolling in...and waited...and waited. Why were we not getting any pictures? We thought for sure this would be easy and we would be catching and killing pigs; but we weren't. Finally we started getting a few pictures of deer coming to the bait but no hogs, and the pictures were few and far between. So what was going on? As a backup, we set up regular trail cameras at our trap sites. It became evident that the issues we were experiencing were tied to the cell service in the area. Despite our phones having service at these sites, it was not sufficient for the camera to operate properly. This was the reason for the sporadic images we received. After this realization, we added a new first step to our process; take the camera to where you want to set up the trap first. If you don't have service, keep looking. In some cases, using the booster antenna available with this trapping system may or may not provide enough signal strength to get the job done.

With our new intel in hand, we began looking for new places to

trap. Once a new site was found, we tested the camera and it appeared we had sufficient signal strength to trap. This area had plenty of fresh hog sign so again we were cautiously optimistic. However, for the first several nights we were only getting deer coming to the bait. Frustration began to sink in at this point. Finally after another night or two of only deer coming to the bait, a large group of pigs showed up. This group came in two nights in a row, and now we started making plans to set up the corral. The next day we made plans to set up the corral if they came in again that night. We went out the next morning and freshened up the bait. That night we waited and watched our phones but unfortunately deer were our only visitors. Surely the next night they would be back in there, right? Well it didn't work that way. Over the next several nights, with the exception of one lone boar that came by one night, we had no pigs visit this site. At this point, bow season was rapidly approaching so we made the decision to pull out so there would not be an issue with bait being on the ground once bow season started. Our pride had taken a hit at this point and we really needed some validation. However, we thought we would have to wait until after deer season to get it, but an opportunity materialized in late fall.

Fall/Winter 2014-2015

After licking our wounds from our experiences during the summer, several hogs began showing up on a piece of land that previously had little to no evidence of pigs. Significant rooting damage was being done to roads and food plots. This tract of land was large enough where we could effectively trap without impacting deer hunters. Our first step again was to take the camera to the sites where pigs had been observed and where the freshest sign was. After finding a spot that had service, we set up the camera and baited the site. Regular trail cameras were set up in other locations as well try to get a feel for how many pigs we were dealing with and if they were frequenting specific areas more than others. The pigs however did not get the memo on what was expected. We moved cameras around chasing fresh sign and observations until we were able to focus in on a couple of areas they seemed to be frequenting. When the pigs finally started cooperating, things began

to work as they were supposed to. By the end of February, we had trapped and removed 38 pigs from the property. From that point through this summer, we have seen no pig activity on the property. Realistically we know pigs are still in the area but for the time being they seem to be avoiding this property. We were not able to start trapping efforts again until the summer but with some places already in mind, we felt better about our process and expectations were high.

We also decided to stop using the electric spin feeder. Hogs did not seem to respond to the timed feedings and usually showed up at our traps around midnight. This move eliminated issues from a failing battery or device in delivering the feed or in other words we removed one headache from the process. Now we simply place a bag or two of corn near the back of the corral. We have not seen any negative impact on trapping success as a result.

Summer 2015

With a couple of spots already scouted, we were ready to hit the ground running. We decided to add a couple more corrals to give us the flexibility of having setups in multiple locations where all we had to do was move the gate depending on pig activity. Our first setup proved fruitful as we trapped and removed a sounder group of 15 pigs. Despite this good start to the summer, it would be another two weeks before another opportunity presented itself.

We began seeing a small sounder group of about seven pigs working around one of our setups. Once we had all seven comfortable coming in to the corral, we moved the gate in hopes of catching them that night. However, the pigs once again had other plans and apparently temporarily moved away from this site. The following night it became evident why, a 300 pound boar paid us a visit in the middle of the



Gathering intel from several days of pictures before dropping the trap door...



...which allows you to know if you have captured the entire sounder.



While two experienced people can construct the new trap with antenna booster in a short amount of time, more people equals a faster set up.



Jeremy Meares shows that good planning and persistence resulted in the capture of this 300 pound boar hog.

night. The following night he came back and even though it was only one individual, we felt like we needed to remove him in hopes that the sounder we knew was there would return. We quickly learned the camera really did not do this boar any justice; he was easily the largest we had trapped to date. Previously the pigs we had trapped went to opposite side of the trap looking for an escape route when we arrived to dispatch them. This boar firmly stood his ground as we approached the trap and charged crashing into the corral panels multiple times. Even though we were in a safe position, a 300 pound animal with bad intentions charging towards you still causes a little anxiety.

For the rest of the summer, pig movements were extremely variable. They would come into the sites for a couple nights in a row, we would move the gate, and then they would vanish for a week or so. We were seeing this happen on multiple sites so we decided to change our strategy to be more opportunistic. In other words, if we had the gate set and most of the sounder group was in the trap we went ahead and dropped the gate. This seemed to work as it would take about a week for pigs to come back to the bait once we removed a group. By the end of the summer, we removed 50 pigs from a couple of different sites. Despite what we had read and heard about not dropping the gate until the entire known sounder group was in the trap, our experiences this summer showed that the pigs we were dealing with would come back and we were catching them. We had some pigs that were unique (color, size, “no ears”) that we could track so we knew they were still around and we eventually caught them.

Each situation will likely be different in how pigs use bait sites so do not be afraid to change tactics from what textbook process is supposed to be when their behavior changes. We are not proclaiming ourselves as experts as we are continuing to learn each time out. There are plenty of resources available to help landowners battle these exotic invaders. Here are a few tips we have discovered as a result of our experiences so far:

Trapping Tips

- When making a decision to install a corral trap, scout the area for fresh hog sign and put out some bait.
- Test the cellular signal at the potential trap site by taking the camera to the exact spot and sending a test picture. If it does not send due to poor signal, look for some alternative sites to set up the trap; sometimes 100 yards makes a difference to the cell tower.
- Build the corral and bait without the gate. Install the camera and booster antenna to monitor activity. Jager Pro™ sells pre-cut wire and a bit that will go on a portable drill that will cut your install time significantly.
- After hogs are comfortable coming and going from the corral, install the gate and use some brush for camo. Before leaving the trap, have somebody test drop the gate using the available cell signal. The battery on the gate should be replaced every two weeks.
- It's tempting to wait for an entire sounder to get in the trap before dropping the gate. However, many times we have had the majority of a sounder entering the corral every night and continued to wait for all of them; but ended up missing trapping opportunities when the entire sounder up and decided to go somewhere else and never returned. We now employ the “bird in the hand” philosophy when we have the majority of the sounder in the corral.

Available Resources

Technology for cellular-based hog trapping systems is constantly changing. The best method to stay current is to follow social media sites or register for free e-newsletters. We suggest jagerpro.com, agrillifeextension.tamu.edu, wildpiginfo.msstate.edu or noble.org/feral-hogs/. 🐷