

Media Review

A Pickup Load of Pigs: The Feral Swine Pandemic

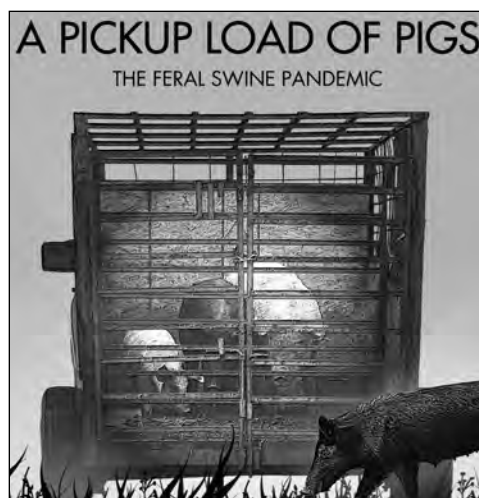
PATRICK JACKSON, Department of Wildland Resources, 5230 Old Main Hill, Utah State University, Logan, UT 84322 USA pat.jackson@aggiemail.usu.edu

THIS 8-MINUTE DOCUMENTARY presents an overview of the problem of feral swine (*Sus scrofa*) in North America. Feral swine are quickly becoming the second-most pervasive species of wildlife after white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), according to this short documentary. *A Pickup Load of Pigs: The Feral Swine Pandemic*, produced by Mississippi State University Extension Services, can be viewed on the Internet (<www.YouTube.com>) under "A Pickup Load of Pigs." A dvd version of the video is available for \$5 on-line at <<http://www.wildpiginfo.msstate.edu>>.

The video gives a brief natural history of feral swine, an account of the damage caused by the animals, and common methods used to control them. Several experts were interviewed for the film, including biologists, veterinarians, and researchers, as well as farmers and extension agents.

The rapid spread of feral swine is in part due to the fact that they are the "ultimate generalists," according to the program. Moreover, a feral swine sow can produce 3 litters in 14-months, depending on resources and population density. Feral swine, however, are not spreading by reproduction alone. Dr. Joe Corn, with the National Feral Swine Mapping System, explained that humans play a role in establishing distant populations by transporting swine for the benefit of hunters. Feral swine threaten natural resources, public health, and agricultural resources, causing extensive environmental damage and economic problems. *A Pickup Load of Pigs* presents an alarming account of the damage that feral swine cause to farmers, cattlemen, and other landowners.

A Pickup Load of Pigs impresses on viewers the difficulty of controlling feral swine populations. The problem is considered a pandemic, and



many methods are not effective enough to make an impact, according to Dr. Mayer. Sport hunting puts only a dent in the population by removing approximately 8 to 50% of the pests.

Control of feral swine is ultimately the landowner's responsibility, but it comes at a great expense of time and money. Landowners need to be patient and learn about the swine's habits before expecting to have success. Feral swine management requires a removal effort over an extended period, not just one weekend. Buddy Goatcher, a contaminants specialist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said that he "loves the European wild boar; it is a magnificent animal, but only in the context of the ecosystem in which it evolved."

A Pickup Load of Pigs: The Feral Swine Pandemic is informative and entertaining. This video is an eye-opener for the general public, as well as land managers. I encourage you to view it.

PATRICK JACKSON is a graduate student at Utah State University (USU). He studies the relationship between coyotes and the availability of food. Before attending USU, he worked in Hawaii performing vertebrate pest removal, including feral swine.

