

Mill Creek Watershed Partnership

FERAL HOG MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

May 3, 2022 | 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Cat Spring Agricultural Society Hall

Introduction (6 p.m.)

- Stacie Villarreal, Austin County AgriLife Extension Agent, opened the program and announced the speakers.
- Dr. Evgenia Spears, Mill Creek Watershed Coordinator at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, provided the overview of the Mill Creek Watershed Protection Plan; introduced the idea of creating a feral hog recipe book and passed along a one-question survey to choose the title for the potential book.

Educational Component (6:10 p.m.)

- Dr. Jake Mowrer, Extension Associate Professor at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service:
 - Introduction to a bounty program, its effectiveness, advantages and disadvantages
 - Past feral hog abatement initiatives in Austin County and lessons learned from those efforts
 - Summaries of bounty programs and their outcomes in other Texas counties including Kerr, Guadalupe, and a collaborative initiative 'Central Texas Feral Hog Task Force' implemented through the partnership between Hays, Caldwell, and Guadalupe Counties.
- Mikayla Killam, Wildlife Damage Management Program Specialist at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension:
 - Overview of the feral hog species, habitat, and distribution trends
 - Impacts of feral hogs on native landscapes, including water quality
 - Community-wide approaches to managing feral hogs and area-specific funding opportunities for feral hog abatement
- Jacob Hertz, Wildlife Damage Management Biologist at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Texas Wildlife Services
 - Approaches to feral hog control: trapping systems, shooting, snaring, etc.
 - Advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

Public Discussion (7:10 p.m.)

- Mikayla and Jacob answered the following questions from the audience:
 - *Is there a specific bait that's scientifically proven to be the best?*
 - *When helicopter hog shooting is appropriate and how efficient is it?*
 - *Is there any kind of food that can be fed to feral hogs to make them sterile?*

- Calvin Harbaugh, Fayette County Game Warden, addressed legal questions related to feral hog hunting and trapping, and provided recommendations for the most efficient approaches to address the issue. Mr. Harbaugh answered the following questions:
 - *Do I need a permit to set up a trap?*
 - *How to maintain traps? How often to check them?*
 - *How to dispose of feral hogs properly? Can I take hogs to a beef processing facility?*
- Other public comments:
 - Consulting and collaborating with marketing experts to increase the financial incentive for killing hogs would be beneficial to this effort.
 - Austin County Precinct 4 Commissioner Chip Reed announced an ongoing bounty program in Austin County: \$5/ears with a limit of 20 per household a month. Austin County Extension Agent and Commissioner Reed will work together to better advertise this bounty program as local residents were largely unaware of it.
- Dr. Jake Mowrer discussed the possibility of developing a proposal and applying for a grant to receive funding for feral hog abatement:
 - While the funding for feral hog abatement activities has to be matched, no match is needed to purchase the equipment (e.g., traps), deliver educational workshops and other training opportunities.
 - The request for *County Feral Hog Grant* proposals will be announced in July with applications being accepted until August 31.
 - Community support is necessary to prepare and submit the application.
 - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension can help prepare the grant application by spearheading writing, leading public meetings, and submitting the proposal.
 - Questions from the audience:
 - *How do trap-share programs work? Who makes sure that traps are moved around as necessary?*
 - *Who pays for the traps? Who sets them up?*
 - *Can this grant help to fund a specialist to help with traps?*
 - *Is the implementation going to be on the county-level?*
 - Mikayla commented that access to private property will be necessary to manage traps.
 - The attendees were encouraged to continue sharing their ideas with the Austin County Extension Agent and Watershed Coordinator.
- Stacie Villarreal distributed the post-program evaluation surveys.

Concluding Comments from Speakers and Adjourn (8:00 p.m.)