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February 18, 2011

Outdoors: Wild hog tournament takes aim on escalating feral hog populations

By Matt Williams
The Huntsville Item

NACOGDOCHES — There is nothing like a little good old-fashioned competition to spur some interest among a salty group of hog hunters. Put some Ben Franklin's on the table as prizes and you just might draw a crowd.

The Texas State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation and Texas Forest Service are hopeful a mob will come when the first annual Lone Star Wild Hog Tournament gets under way on Feb. 26.

The event, which runs through March 6, will award cash prizes up to \$1,000 to the winning teams or individuals in three different regions across eastern Texas.

Second place will pay \$750; \$500 for third.

Rather than measuring hogs by weight, winners will be decided by the total number of feral hogs they bring to designated check-in points over the course of the nine-day tournament.

"It doesn't matter if it is 10 inches tall or 200 pounds, a dead hog is a good hog," says tournament organizer Scotty Parsons of Bayou Vista. "They all count the same."

Parsons is a senior regional biologist with the NWTF. He says the idea for the tournament came about after private landowners adjacent to national forest lands continued to complain about escalating feral hog populations. Moreover, the amount of damage the animals are doing to their land and other property.

According to Parsons, year-round hog hunting opportunities are limited on some national forest areas as the result of friendly agreements with multiple user groups. He says wild hogs have learned to gravitate to these types of areas to get away from hunting pressure, while at the same time allowing their numbers to multiply without interruption.

"Hogs might use a national forest area like refuge by day, then spill over onto adjacent private property and pastures to do their dirty work at night," he said. "It is a pretty big problem."

It is not just an East Texas thing, either. Feral hog populations across Texas represent a virtual powder keg with a volatile history of past explosions to fuel the existence of what many wildlife experts consider to be one of the most invasive, destructive species on the planet.

They are also among the most prolific. A healthy sow might raise two litters per year. The average litter is about six, and those youngsters are sexually mature at six months of age. Hogs reproduce like rabbits.

Not surprisingly, feral hog populations are at an all-time high in Texas. And the numbers continue to mount. With an estimated population of 2 million animals roaming the landscape, Texas has more feral hogs than any other state.

And they cost us dearly. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department estimates wild swine do more

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than \$400 million worth of damage across the state each year.

Pigs cost Texas landowners millions of dollars every year by destroying cash crops, mangling game feeders and ripping down fences. They damage roads and demolish pasture land by uprooting the ground while foraging for food, often times leaving in their path a swath of destruction that can take weeks of hard work and thousands of dollars to repair.

Figures compiled by the Texas Cooperative Extension Service indicate hogs do about \$10 million in damage annually in the Pineywoods alone. Landowners here spend about \$1.1 million repairing a portion of what the pigs tear up every year.

Annual damage estimates are about \$8.9 million in the Post Oak. Landowners there spend \$1.3 million each year on repair and control.

Hogs also compete for food with livestock and native game animals such as whitetail deer and wild turkeys. Still another worry is the fact the animals carry diseases such as swine brucellosis and pseudo-rabies.

In Bell, Coryell and Crosby counties, researchers with the Texas Tech University Institute of Environmental and Human Health recently tested 130 feral hogs and discovered evidence of a bacteria that causes tularemia.

Commonly known as rabbit fever, the disease is frequently carried by rodents, mosquitos, deer flies and ticks.

Researchers say they have yet to determine the subspecies of bacteria infecting the hogs. They are hopeful it is not Type A. According to Steve Presley, the zoonotic disease researcher who supervised the study, the Type A subspecies can be lethal to humans.

Population control will be the name of the game at the upcoming hog hunting tournament, which will span dozens counties across southeast and northeast Texas. The tournament will be divided into three regions -- North, Central and South.

Contestants may enter individually for \$20, or \$35 for a two-man team. Hogs may taken on designated tournament days only, using any legal means or methods, including traps, firearms, archery gear, etc. The use of dogs is allowed. No stock piling of hogs until tournament time is allowed.

All contestants must have a valid hunting license. Hogs may be taken on private property that you lease, own or have permission to hunt. Public land hunters must have an Annual Public Lands Permit (\$48) where required.

Check-in stations at designated national forest ranger stations will be open from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. daily. To learn more about the tournament rules and see check-in station locations, see nwtf.org/texas/.

    [Text Only](#)

Sports

Twitter News

Outdoors: Wild hog tournament takes aim on escalating feral hog populations

February 18, 2011

'Basically, we're all brothers'

Jeremy Klespis knew right away that he had found something special. A newcomer to the Huntsville Lakers swim team, Klespis was placed on a relay team with young Matthew Bitara, Colson Slaven and Jaron Wagner.

"It was my first year swimming and I thought these guys were incredibly cool," Klespis recalled Thursday. "I wasn't as fast as they



'Hate Mail' opens at Old Town Theatre... <http://bit.ly/gVgLOJ> about 15 hours ago

Hornets relay team ready for state swim meet... <http://bit.ly/fUBOrm> about 15 hours ago

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were, but they stuck with me and eventually I got faster."

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Community Calendar

February 17, 2011 1 Photo

Having what it takes

The Lady Hornets know they are going to have to play better for an entire game if they want to reach their season goal of making the state basketball tournament in Austin in a couple of weeks.



February 17, 2011 1 Photo

It's time to break a tie

Ding, ding, ding. The bell is about to ring for round three between the Huntsville Hornets and Kingwood Park Panthers.



Tied for second place in District 18-4A after 14 games, the two teams will clash again Friday to determine playoff seeding. The winner of Friday's game, which is scheduled to tip off at 6 p.m. at Willis High School, advances to the Class 4A state basketball playoffs as the second seed from 18-4A; the loser moves on as the third-place team.

February 16, 2011 1 Photo

Split decision

First baseman Kim Damian went 4-for-7 with three RBIs to lead Sam Houston as the Bearkats split a nonconference softball doubleheader with Houston Baptist on Tuesday in Huntsville.



The Huskies run-ruled the Bearkats 9-1 in the first game, but SHSU bounced back for a 9-5 victory in the nightcap.

February 16, 2011 1 Photo

Rodeo Insider: PBR's Iron Cowboy to be crowned in Arlington

Two weeks ago, the Cowboys Stadium staff worked around snow and ice storms, preparing to host pro football's Super Bowl. This weekend, they are hauling in arena dirt to accommodate the world's top bull riders and the toughest bovines around.

February 16, 2011

Moving right along

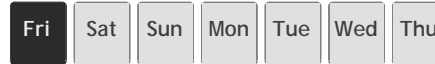
The Lady Spartans hung around longer than most teams, but the result Tuesday night was the same. The 20th-ranked Lady Hornets of Huntsville turned up the heat toward the end of the second quarter, and in a matter of minutes, used easy baskets off turnovers to squash any hopes Houston Stratford had at a bi-district playoff upset.



February 16, 2011 1 Photo

Lady Dogs survive

If it wasn't deja vu, then it was something awfully similar. As the final minutes slowly ticked away in Tuesday's bi-district playoff game against Buna, New Waverly's big lead kept on shrinking and even got down to single digits. Just as they had done in last year's bi-district playoff game against Kirbyville, the Lady Dogs regrouped and found a way to



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tough out a 58-47 victory at Big Sandy High School.

February 16, 2011 1 Photo

Getting ready for another playoff run

Huntsville senior Titus Powell popped a 3-pointer, then pronounced the Hornets ready for the playoffs.

February 16, 2011

With a bang, Lady Hornets win softball opener 5-3

Huntsville sophomore Hannah Marino ripped a two-run double Tuesday night in the Lady Hornets' softball season opener at Kate Barr Ross Park. Huntsville battled back and beat Oak Ridge 5-3 in a tight nondistrict contest.

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