

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

Annual Report on Invasive Wild Pig Sightings: 2022–2023

This fourth annual report summarizes wild pig sightings reported and site visits in Ontario between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023.

In Ontario, a wild pig is defined as any pig outside of a fence that is not contained or under the physical control of a person (Figure 1). This includes free roaming pigs that are:

- domesticated pigs (for example, pot-bellied pigs and farmed domestic breeds, including heritage breeds)
- Eurasian wild boar
- hybrids of domesticated pigs and Eurasian wild boar

No evidence to date suggests that wild pigs are established — meaning self-sustaining and breeding — in Ontario. However, reports of wild pigs in Ontario continue to be submitted, indicating that without continued action wild pigs could become established. The least costly and most effective approach for managing invasive species such as wild pigs is to act early (Figure 1). So, Ontario has set the proactive goal of preventing invasive wild pigs from establishing in the province.

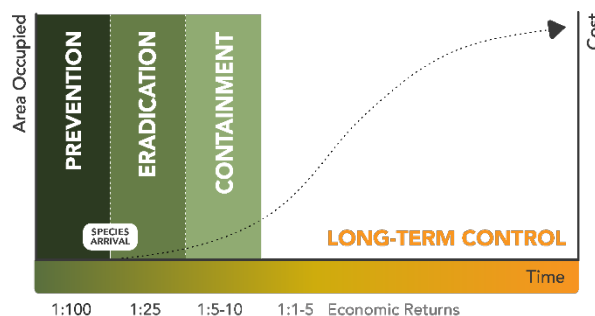


Figure 1. Invasive species invasion curve. Credit: Chart adapted by the Invasive Species Centre from Generalised Invasion Curve (Agriculture Victoria 2009).

Internal staff training

In June 2022, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) provided training to local field staff on [Ontario's Strategy to Address the Threat of Invasive Wild Pigs](#) and methods of investigating wild pig cases. This training will increase MNRF local capacity to follow up on wild pig reports and remove wild pigs from the landscape, when necessary.

Reports and follow-up

Ontario-based [research](#) and on-site investigations have revealed that wild pigs reported in Ontario are originating from pigs escaping from captivity. Evidence does not suggest that wild pigs are currently invading from neighbouring jurisdictions.

The ministry receives reports of wild pigs from the public through the wild pigs email address (wildpigs@ontario.ca), phone line (1-833-933-2355), [iNaturalist Ontario wild pig reporting](#), and partners. MNRF staff follow up on all reports received by communicating with the reporter, following up remotely with municipalities, local businesses, and residents; conducting in-person investigations; or using a combination of these methods.

Wild pig reports

Wild pig sightings are sorted into four categories: domesticated pigs, pot-bellied pigs, Eurasian wild boar, and unknown (Figure 2). Between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023, 39% of reports received were of unknown pig type. The unknown category is used when the type cannot be definitively identified, for example, due to blurry photos or vague reports. Of the identified pig types reported, most (58%) were pot-bellied (36%) and domesticated (22%) pigs. These pigs are often determined to be escapees from enclosures or containment. Sightings of

Eurasian wild boar and hybrids make up a small proportion (3%) of the wild pig sightings in Ontario. Most of the wild pigs reported have been lone animals (48%) or animals with no young (28%), and some wild pigs were reported found dead (17%). Only 7% of the reports were in the highest risk category of multiple pigs with young (Figure 2).

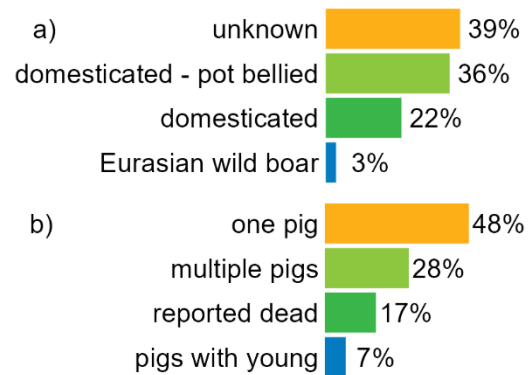


Figure 2. Types (a) and number (b) of wild pigs reported to the ministry.

Between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023 site visits were conducted at 35 unique locations (Figure 3). During these site visits, MNRF staff canvassed neighbourhoods and spoke with residents to gather additional information, such as number of pigs roaming freely, type of pigs, whether they have caused any damage, and the wild pigs' locations. Priority locations for site visits were those where the sighting report confidence was high and where pigs posed a greater risk of establishing a breeding population or posing a threat to property, livestock, or human safety.

Ontario Wild Pig Sightings and Field Investigations

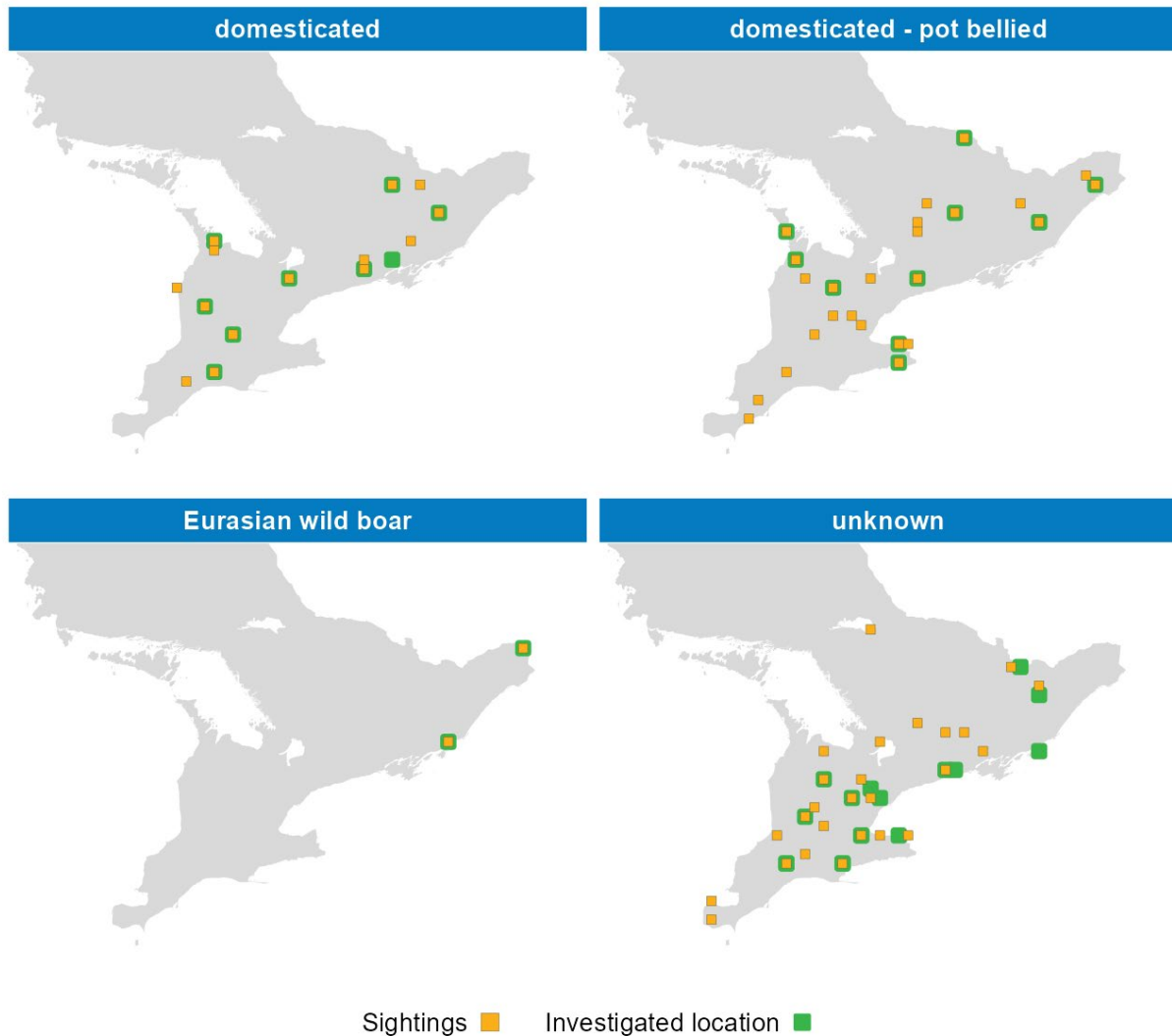


Figure 3. Sightings of wild pigs (domesticated, pot bellied, Eurasian wild boar, and hybrid pigs outside of a fence) in Ontario reported between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023. Includes sightings defined as “resolved” — including dead or removed wild pigs, owned pet pigs, and recently escaped or free roaming livestock that have since returned to captivity. Locations where the ministry investigated wild pig sightings between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023 are highlighted in green. Investigated locations that do not overlap a sighting may occur because the associated sighting was received before April 1, 2022; the sighting was low confidence (the animal may not have been a pig); or the sighting was determined through investigation to be another species.

During these site visits, staff spoke with people at 198 properties, and left fact sheets and staff contact information at an additional 274 properties. Where evidence was sufficient that wild pigs were present in the area, staff deployed trail cameras to help with locating them.

Between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023, the MNRF received 69 unique moderate or high confidence wild pig sightings from the public, MNRF staff, other agencies, internet, and media. Another 32 low confidence sightings were reported. Low confidence means that the individual reporting the sighting was not sure if what they saw or heard was a pig. Overall, 101 reports were submitted during the reporting period, averaging eight per month (Figure 4).

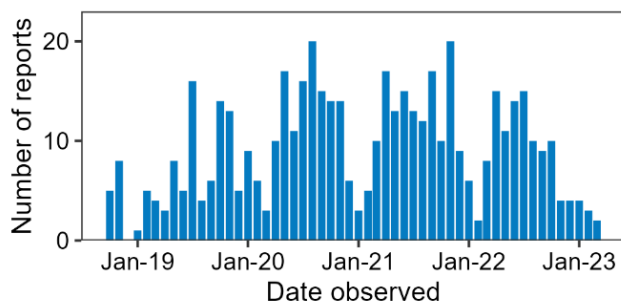


Figure 4. The number of reports submitted to the wild pigs email and phone line from December 2018 – March 2023.

Since 2020 the ministry has removed 17 wild pigs and facilitated the removal of another 10 wild pigs from the natural environment in Ontario.

Policy and new regulations

[Ontario's Strategy to Address the Threat of Invasive Wild Pigs](#) was finalized in October 2021. The strategy outlines four objectives and supporting actions to prevent the establishment of invasive wild pigs in the province. Actions are varied, highlighting the need for clear communication, robust policy, Ontario-specific research and management, and strong collaboration among governments, agencies, and industry partners.

The ministry's policy and regulatory approaches are grounded in Ontario-based research on wild pigs and research findings from other jurisdictions across North America.

Pig escapes or releases

Many of the wild pigs that are investigated by MNRF staff are determined to be owned pigs that have escaped from captivity. For example, a farmed domesticated pig that has found a hole in a fence or a pot-bellied pig that has strayed from its home. Farmers and animal owners are obligated to keep their livestock under their care and to get them back under control when they escape containment. Under no circumstances is it acceptable to allow farm animals to roam unchecked in Ontario (Figure 5). Despite efforts from the livestock owner or caretaker, sometimes animals do escape. All pigs including pot-bellied pigs and domesticated pigs have the potential to cause damage to the

natural environment, spread disease, and compete with native wildlife.



Figure 5. Winnie the pig, contained responsibly with a leash.

As of January 1, 2022, wild pigs are a restricted species under [the *Invasive Species Act, 2015*](#). Under this legislation, it is illegal to release any pig into the natural environment. If a pig escapes, the owner is [required to notify](#) the ministry of the escape and capture or kill the pig as soon as possible. If you see a pig roaming and believe it could be owned, speak with neighbours, ask if they have a pig that has escaped and find out if it has been reported or recaptured. This information is shared with the MNRF when you report your sighting. For more information about how to deal with escaped livestock and pets in your community see the [OMAFRA factsheets](#).

Hunting

It is illegal to hunt pigs in Ontario. Research and management experiences from other jurisdictions indicate that hunting accelerates the spread of wild pigs. When exposed to hunting pressure, wild pigs flee into new areas and change their behaviour to avoid humans, making them more difficult to trap and remove from the landscape. The ministry traps and removes wild pigs from the natural environment using a whole sounder approach (meaning they remove the entire herd).

Landowners have the right to protect their property from damage caused by pigs, including for the purpose of maintaining biosecurity. Protection can include dispatching wild pigs, with the provision to first consider that they may be owned and are being sought for recapture by their owners. Landowners and agents acting on their behalf must comply with all relevant federal, provincial, and municipal legislation, such as trespass and licensing and discharge of firearms, and [must notify the ministry](#) that they have done so. This reporting is pertinent for ministry staff who are tracking and responding to wild pig sightings.

Phase out of live Eurasian wild boar and their hybrids

Eurasian wild boar and their hybrids are of particular concern as an invasive species. Research indicates that Eurasian wild boar and their hybrids have characteristics that

make them more likely to survive and successfully reproduce in the wild. Eurasian wild boar and their hybrids present a substantial risk to Ontario's natural environment and for the establishment of wild pig populations.

Ontario is phasing live Eurasian wild boar and their hybrids out of the province by 2024. For most Ontarians, it is illegal to import, possess, transport, propagate, lease, trade, buy, and sell live Eurasian wild boar and their hybrids. As of January 1, 2024, these prohibitions will apply to everyone in the province. These directions related to Eurasian wild boar and their hybrids **do not** apply to domesticated pigs (for example, *Sus scrofa domesticus*), including commercial and heritage breeds of pigs or pot-bellied pigs.

After January 1, 2024, if you see live Eurasian wild boar or hybrids (Figure 6) please report them to the MNRF TIPS line at 1-877-847-7667 or Crime Stoppers (anonymous) at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477).

Research and control of invasive wild pigs would not be possible without the many people who have reported their wild pig sightings. The ministry thanks everyone who reached out for their participation in our monitoring program.



Figure 6. Eurasian wild boar farm.

For more information about wild pigs, including our approach on how to address them and current regulations, please visit www.ontario.ca/wildpigs.

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters' (OFAH) Wild Pig Surveillance Program

The MNRF collaborates with OFAH on wild pig surveillance in Ontario. Staff with the OFAH's Invading Species Awareness Program assisted with wild pig surveillance in 2022 through education and organizing member citizen science. Fifty trail cameras were deployed in Northwestern Ontario and more than 158,000 photos were received from member volunteers. All photos received are catalogued with non-personal identifiers and are examined for potential wild pig occurrences. No wild pigs were documented in the photos collected.

Resources

Read past annual reports on our website:
[Status of invasive wild pigs in Ontario.](#)

Read peer reviewed articles about wild pigs in Ontario:

Koen, E.L. and Newton, E.J., [Outreach increases detections of an invasive species in a crowdsourced monitoring program.](#) April 2021. *Biological Invasions* 23(1).

Pollock, L.A., Newton, E.J., and Koen, E.L., [Predicting the high-risk areas for African swine fever spread at the wild-domestic pig interface in Ontario.](#) 2021. *Preventative Veterinary Medicine* (191).

Koen, E.L, Newton, E.J., and Ellington, E.H., [Evaluating potential sources of invasive wild pigs in Ontario.](#) 2021. *Ecology and Evolution.*

For additional support and guidance, refer to the [Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' fact sheets.](#)

For pig owners, ensure that your pigs are contained. For more information on best practices for keeping your livestock contained, fencing for outdoor pig production, and dealing with escaped livestock in your community, visit our website at www.ontario.ca/wildpigs.

Have you seen a wild pig? Report your sightings to wildpigs@ontario.ca or 1-833-933-2355.

Some of the information in this document may not be compatible with assistive technologies. If you need any of the information in an alternate format, please contact info.mnrfscience@ontario.ca.