

## Ministry of Natural Resources

# Annual Report on Invasive Wild Pig Sightings: 2023–2024

This fifth annual report summarizes wild pig sightings and associated site visits in Ontario between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024.

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. This definition includes all free roaming pigs: domesticated and pot-bellied pigs, Eurasian wild boar, and hybrids.

While evidence suggests that wild pig populations are not established in Ontario, research shows that a proactive approach to managing this invasive species is most successful. Therefore, MNR continues to collect and follow-up on wild pig sightings in the province.

### ***Reports and follow-up***

The ministry receives reports of wild pigs from the public through the wild pigs email address ([wildpigs@ontario.ca](mailto:wildpigs@ontario.ca)), phone line (1-833-933-2355), [iNaturalist Ontario wild pig reporting](#), and partners. MNR staff

follow up on all reports received by communicating with the reporter, conducting in-person investigations, following up remotely with municipalities, local businesses, and residents or using a combination of these methods.

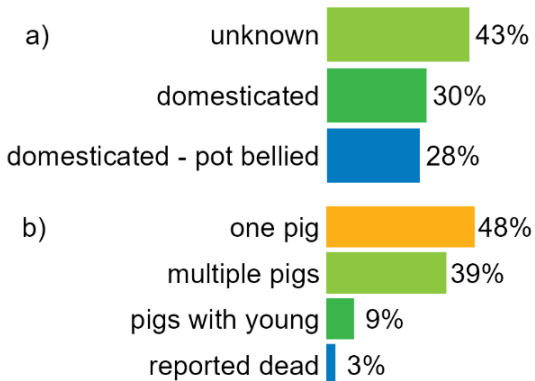
Prior [research](#) in the province revealed that wild pigs are not immigrating into Ontario from neighbouring jurisdictions; rather, most sightings originate from pigs that have escaped from captivity and current year data supports this observation.

### ***Wild pig reports***

Wild pig sightings are sorted into four categories: domesticated pigs, pot-bellied pigs, Eurasian wild boar, and unknown (when the pig type cannot be verified with a photo or is unclear). Between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024, 43% of reports received were of unknown pig type. Domesticated pigs made up 30% of the total sightings, and pot-bellied pigs the remaining 28% (Figure 1). These pigs are often determined to be escapees from enclosures or containment. One sighting

of Eurasian wild boar was confirmed during this period, resulting in the removal of two pigs from the wild in eastern Ontario; they are not included in figures 1 and 2 because these individuals were first sighted before this annual report period. Eurasian wild boar sightings have declined since their phase out was initiated in Ontario in 2022 (Figure 2).

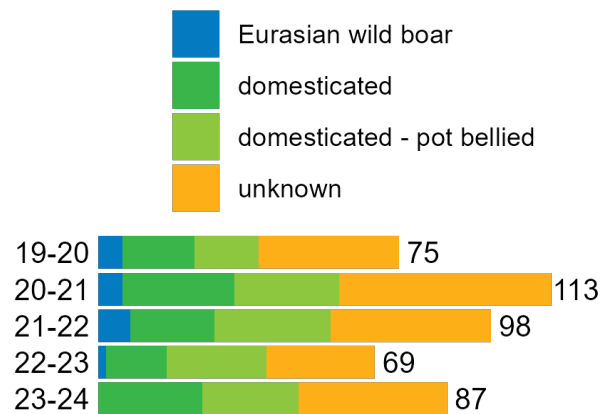
Most of the wild pigs reported have been lone animals (48%) or animals with no young (39%), and some wild pigs were found dead, then reported (3%). Only 9% of the reports were in the highest risk category of multiple pigs with young (Figure 1), though none of these reports appeared to be established groups breeding in the wild.



**Figure 1.** Types (a) and number (b) of wild pigs reported to the ministry.

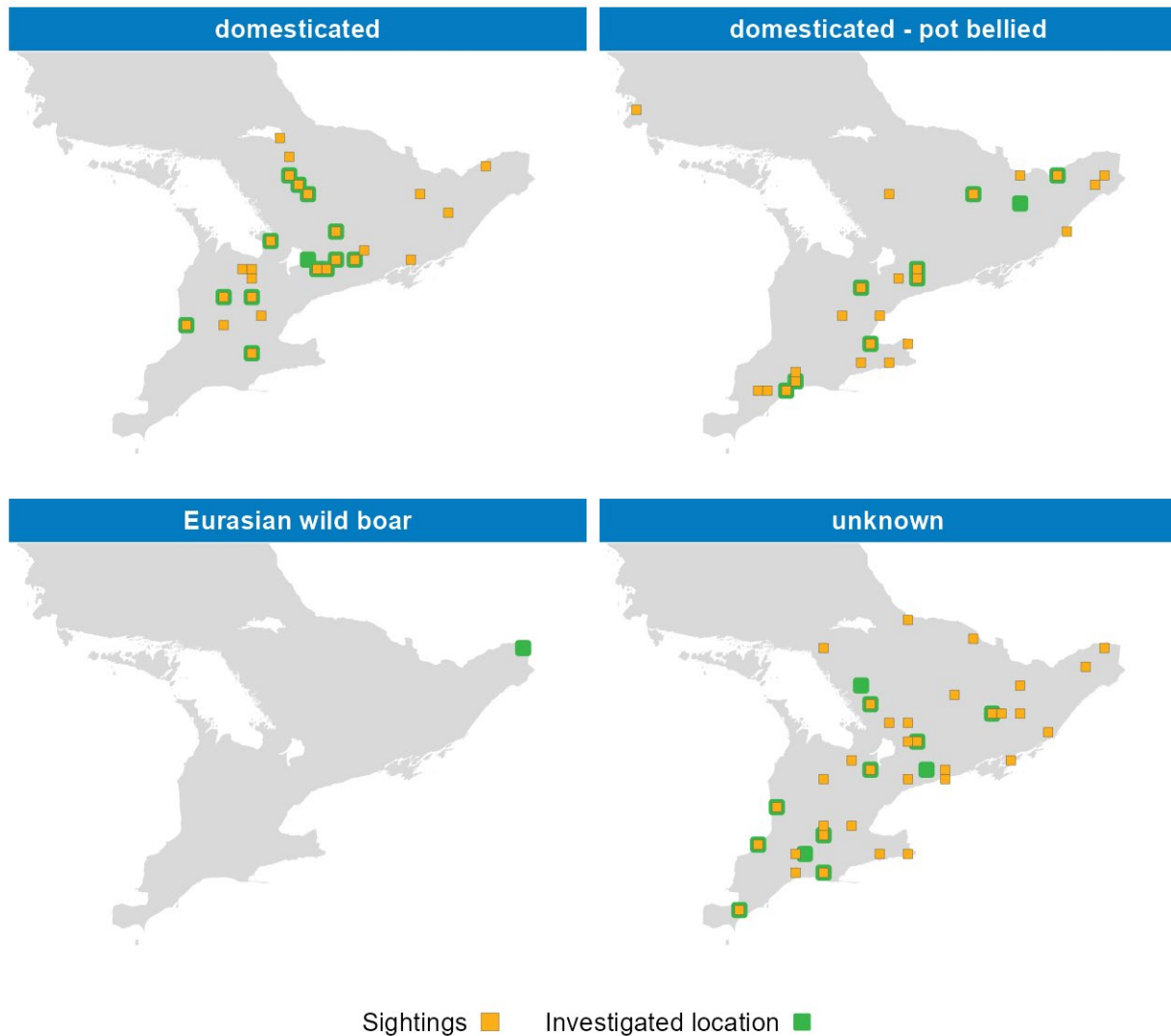
Between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024, site visits were conducted at 35 unique locations (Figure 3). MNR staff

prioritized sightings for investigation when the reporter was certain they saw a wild pig (e.g., photo evidence, multiple sightings), where pigs posed a higher risk of breeding in the wild, or posed a threat to property, livestock, or human safety. During investigations this past year, ministry staff spoke with 281 residents to gather information and to facilitate the return or removal of the pigs.



**Figure 2.** Pig types reported to the ministry over time by reporting year, 2019–2024. Numbers at end of bars represent total number of unique moderate or high confidence sightings of wild pigs each reporting year.

During these 35 site visits, MNR staff canvassed neighbourhoods and spoke with residents to gather additional information, such as number of pigs roaming information, such as number of pigs roaming freely, type of pigs,



**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, 2023 and March 31, 2024. 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, 2023 and March 31, 2024 are highlighted in green. Investigated locations that do not overlap a sighting may occur because the associated sighting was received before April 1, 2023; the sighting was low confidence (the animal may not have been a pig); or the sighting was determined through investigation to be another species. A single low confidence sighting outside the coverage of the figure occurred in Cochrane, Ontario.

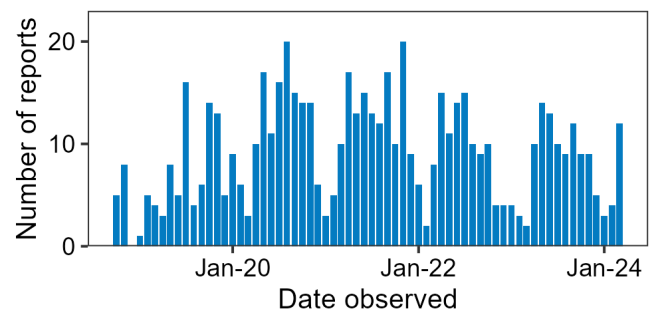
whether they have caused damage, and the wild pigs' locations. Priority locations for site visits were those where the sighting report confidence was high and where pigs posed a greater risk of establishing a breeding population or posing a threat to property, livestock, or human safety.

During these site visits, staff spoke with people at 125 properties, and left fact sheets and contact information at an additional 156 properties. Where evidence was sufficient that wild pigs were present in the area, staff deployed trail cameras to help locate them.

Between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024, the MNR received 87 unique moderate or high confidence wild pig sightings from the public, MNR staff, other agencies, internet, and media (Figure 2). Another 22 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, 109 reports were submitted during the reporting period, averaging about 9 per month (Figure 4).

This past year, MNR staff removed 3 wild pigs (all from eastern Ontario) and assisted with recapture of 1 wild pig in southwestern Ontario. An additional 56 wild pigs connected with ministry

investigations were known to be removed or recaptured by residents and other partners. Since 2020, the ministry has removed 20 wild pigs and has assisted with trapping and the return of 9 wild pigs to captivity. A further estimated 187 wild pigs associated with ministry investigations were reported to have been removed or recaptured by residents and other partners since 2020.



**Figure 4.** The number of reports submitted to the wild pigs email and phone line from December 2018–March 2024.

### ***Pig escapes or releases***

Escapees continue to make up most of the wild pig reports in the province. Most of these pigs returned to their enclosures or were recaptured by their owners.



**Figure 5.** Ham on the lam. Escapee from abattoir in Harriston, ON. (Photo Credit: MNR)

### **Containment**

Wild pigs are a restricted species under the [Invasive Species Act, 2015](#) and prohibitions apply (e.g., pig escapes must be reported to the ministry and escaped pigs must be captured or killed as soon as possible). If you see a wild pig, speak with neighbours; ask if they have a pig that has escaped and find out if it has been reported or recaptured. For more resources, see the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Agribusiness's page on [dealing with escaped livestock](#) and [fencing best practices](#).

### **New technology to detect pigs**

Since successfully using drone technology to assist in locating 14 wild pigs in Pickering in 2021, MNR has continued to use drones for onsite investigations. Drones outfitted with thermal cameras were used to locate elusive pigs that were otherwise extremely difficult to detect (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** Drone in flight, used to locate animals. (Photo credit: MNR)

Two wild pigs were located and removed after detection via drones. The drones also increased personnel safety in the field by allowing staff to physically distance from potentially aggressive wildlife.

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

The MNR collaborates with OFAH on wild pig surveillance in Ontario. Through OFAH's Invading Species Awareness Program, 50 trail cameras were deployed in northwestern Ontario in 2022. This past year, more than 154,000 photos were received from member volunteers. All photos received were catalogued with non-personal identifiers and examined for potential wild pig occurrences. No wild pigs were documented in these photos.

### ***Eurasian wild boar and their hybrids***

Eurasian wild boar and their hybrids have characteristics that make them more likely to survive and successfully reproduce in the wild; therefore, they are more likely to establish self-sustaining populations that could pose a substantial risk to ecosystems in our province.

As of January 1, 2024, it is illegal to import, possess, transport, propagate, lease, trade, buy, and sell live Eurasian wild boar and their hybrids. These prohibitions 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.

**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](http://www.ontario.ca/wildpigs).



**Figure 7.** Photo of a Eurasian wild boar captured by a ministry trail camera.

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 all contributors for their participation in our monitoring program.

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

Have you seen a wild pig? Report your sightings to [wildpigs@ontario.ca](mailto: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](mailto:info.mnrfscience@ontario.ca)