

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD, AND FORESTRY

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Criminal Activity Tied to Feral Hogs

This week authorities from the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and local law enforcement conducted a feral swine eradication operation in the panhandle of Oklahoma after feral swine that were illegally transported and released tested positive for pseudorabies. The Law Enforcement Section of ODAFF conducted a criminal investigation regarding the illegal release of feral swine in Beaver County. Beaver County resident, Wesley Dean Kirton has been charged with the following felonies: releasing feral swine into the wild, transporting feral swine without a transporter's license, operating a feral swine handling facility without a license and cruelty to animals. Beaver county District Attorney, James M. Boring, will prosecute for the alleged violations.

In 2008 the Feral Swine Control Act was passed in Oklahoma as a way to address feral swine facility and transporter licensing. Feral swine pose a serious threat to agricultural producers and property. They will eat and destroy crops such as corn, milo, wheat, hay, watermelon and peanuts. Known predators, they will also prey upon young livestock and other small animals.

In addition to the damage feral swine cause they are also known to carry or transmit more than 30 diseases that can be contracted by livestock, people, pets and wildlife. The feral swine that were illegally transported to Beaver County tested positive for pseudorabies which causes particular concern for livestock producers in the area. This area of the state is home to a large commercial swine industry. The State of Oklahoma has eradicated pseudorabies and swine brucellosis from the commercial swine industry but the diseases are still carried and transmitted by the feral swine population. Pseudorabies is a viral disease in swine that that can be transmitted to other mammals including dogs, cattle, sheep, goats, cats and raccoons and is usually fatal in these hosts. Feral swine are also carriers of brucellosis, another dangerous disease that affects both livestock and humans

Feral swine can weigh 75-250 pounds and be four to six feet in length. Damage caused by feral swine is often done at night when the animals are most active. To tell if feral swine are active in your area, look for signs of rooting, rubbing, wallowing and tracks. For more information regarding feral swine, visit www.ag.ok.gov/ais/feralswine.

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