

Wild swine, aka feral pigs, said making inroads in state, including Jo County

Feral pigs, which are responsible for an estimated \$800 million in annual damages to agriculture commodities nationwide, are rapidly expanding their range across Oregon.

That's according to a recent risk assessment conducted by scientists at Oregon State University (OSU) at Corvallis.

Also called wild boars or wild swine, omnivorous feral pigs vary in appearance, but most have hairy coats, thick necks and shoulders and wedge-shaped heads suitable for digging and rooting.

"These animals have the capability to create incredible damage across a

later time, Coblenz said, adding that "the majority of feral pigs in Oregon have been kicked out of the back of a pickup truck."

This manner of scattered distribution could explain the animals' recent appearance in central Oregon around Prineville and Madras areas, Coblenz said, as they were not traditionally thought of as habitable for the pigs.

"They tend to be most successful in warmer, wetter areas and are often found in riparian zones," he said. "It used to be a population would die off due to freezing temperatures, but we're not having winters like we used to, and we're seeing the

gion, does not mean they are not living there, competing with native species for resources and habitat. They will aggressively defend food sources, and because of this they pose a significant problem for deer and other wildlife.

"Part of the reason that feral pigs are such a risk to the state's economy and environment is because of their reproductive capabilities. Sows reach sexual maturity as early as four months and can produce two litters averaging five young per year.

"Unchecked, the pigs can spread until they've populated all available areas, said Coblenz, who is a professor in OSU's Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife.

"Think of the situation as a lit stick of dynamite," he said. "If you throw it on a landscape one of two things will happen: the fuse will go out, or the stick will explode. Right now an invasion is occurring, but you don't know it because you can't see it."

Oregon agriculture brings in revenues of more than \$3.6 billion each year. Many of the state's crops grow in areas and mediums highly attractive to feral pigs, and could be susceptible to disturbance by the invasive animals.

Feral pig activity and rooting near roadways and buildings can damage structural integrity and increase maintenance costs. Each year the United States spends less than \$1 million in feral pig control costs.

According to the risk assessment, it is likely that the current feral pig populations in Oregon could be removed with reasonable costs and efforts. However, equally probable is the possibility for the population to grow at such a rate that control methods would be too costly to attempt and would not offer long-term success, OSU said.

Feral pigs are subject to predation by cougars, bears, coyotes and eagles, however they still manage to thrive when introduced to new areas.

Coblenz recommends that anyone who sees a feral pig, or sees evidence of rooting and wallowing behavior immediately contact the office of the division of fish and wildlife.

infecting, ODA said. A diligent policy of cutting, stacking, and burning infected trees and shrubs within the nearly 22-mile quarantined area of Curry County shows signs of working.

Even though new sites continue to be found, the numbers are dramatically less than the first couple of years and most infected trees remain within the quarantine boundaries.

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A LOT OF POT was seized by Oregon State Police on Interstate 5 last week near Gold Hill. OSP said that approximately 200 pounds of marijuana valued at \$150,000 was discovered hidden in a pickup truck, originally stopped for a traffic violation. The driver was detained, but as of early this week he had not been identified or arrested pending further investigation. (Photo provided by OSP)

Dreaded smallpox epidemic in 1860s struck Jackson, Josephine citizenry

By ROGER BRANDT
For IVN

In fall 1868, word began to spread about the increasing incidence of smallpox in communities of the Pacific Northwest.

By December, an epidemic appeared to be building momentum in Jacksonville, and it is likely that the disease spread into other communities, including Illinois Valley, where history was not well recorded.

The best snapshot of this event is found in the historical records of Jacksonville and illustrates how people react when an epidemic strikes.

Smallpox was a well-known disease to physicians, but the form found here apparently was different from the known forms. For this reason, the disease became well established before it was identified.

The appearance of the disease was at first not considered to be a serious concern. Physicians suggested ways to prevent the spread of disease within each

household rather than enforce quarantines. Some recommendations included pouring disinfectant in a saucer and leaving it exposed on a table or counter in the house. Others touted the benefits of cleanliness.

All residents were encouraged to vaccinate members of their family using the well-known method of gathering the pustules of cowpox, a related disease often found on the udders of cows, and smearing this into a cut made on the skin of the person to be vaccinated.

This home-spun defense against smallpox had been practiced in America for more than 150 years. And although it was easy to administer, a number of Jacksonville residents refused to do it. This may have ultimately contributed to the spread of the disease.

Within a short time after the first appearance of smallpox, people began to die. In Jacksonville, a quarantine was established as a precaution against the spread of the disease. Yel-

low flags were used to mark quarantined households, and it wasn't long before these flags were seen on every side of town. By January, the death toll in Jacksonville had risen to 18.

Concerns about the spread of the disease intensified, and citizens began trying their own remedies for stopping the epidemic. Some community members came up with the idea of burning pitch pine in the streets to purify the air. Others added sulphur to the flames, probably thinking this would help disinfect the air. For several days, dense clouds of choking smoke billowed in the streets.

By the end of February 1869, the quarantines and other measures to control the disease brought the epidemic to an abrupt stop.

The smallpox epidemic in Southwestern Oregon was a short event in history. The most important lesson it offers us today is the reminder that the best remedy for an epidemic is a community working together.

Eradicating sudden oak death on coast a 'mixed bag' of results so far, notes ODA

The status of a project to eradicate sudden oak death (SOD) on the S.W. Oregon coast is a mixed bag of results so far.

While a five-year multi-agency effort to completely get rid of the tree-killing disease has not yet reached its ultimate goal, officials are encouraged that it hasn't spread far beyond its original detection site an unspecified distance northeast of Brookings in Curry County.

The site has included less than 88 acres of infected plant material, and remains the only place in Oregon where Phytophthora ramorum -- the fungus that causes sudden oak death--has been found in the natural environment.

"If you look at the results since 2001, when we first found the disease, we have definitely been successful at slowing the spread," said Dan Hilburn, administrator of Oregon Dept. of Agriculture

ture's (ODA) Plant Division.

"There is no question that had we not done what we have, sudden oak death would have spread throughout the county and would probably be in other Oregon counties by now," he said.

The fungus-caused disease has already left a trail of dead trees in central and Northern California ever since it first was detected in the San Francisco Bay Area in the mid-1990s. P. ramorum invades susceptible trees through the bark, killing the entire tree or portions of the tree.

Certain species of oak commonly found in S.W. Oregon, including tanoak and black oak, are very susceptible. But P. ramorum also infects rhododendron, huckleberry, madrone, myrtle, and several other shrubs.

Nowhere else in the world has there been success in eradicating P. ramorum in the wild from an area that has been

Oregon mental health sites upgrade due

A proposed restructure of Oregon's mental health system that includes constructing several new state hospital facilities with an anticipated cost between \$324 and \$334 million was unveiled last week.

The proposal calls for building one 620-bed facility in the North Willamette Valley region, one 360-bed facility south of Linn County on the west side of the Cascades, and at least two nonhospital-level 16-bed secure residential treatment settings east of the Cascades.

The public will be offered opportunities to comment on the proposal during the next several weeks.

The proposal is based on information submitted by KMD Architects, of San

Francisco, the consultant commissioned by the governor and Legislature to lead the review of the current public mental health system and develop a master plan for redesigning the system.

The plan was announced by Senate President Peter Courtney (D-Salem), House Speaker Karen Minnis (R-Wood Village) and Gov. Kulon-goski.

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