SQUEAL ON PIGS!

2025 Year in Review

About Us

Wild pigs pose a threat to rural Manitoba. They contaminate water sources, damage natural habitats and farm crops, and can spread up to 89 different diseases to commercial and small-scale livestock.

Squeal on Pigs Manitoba was formed as a partnership between Manitoba Pork, the Government of Canada, and the Province of Manitoba to help spread awareness of the significant issue of invasive wild pigs on our landscape, and to empower Manitobans with the ability to spot wild pigs on the landscape and report their movement.

Our Team

Squeal on Pigs Manitoba

Dr. Wayne Lees, Project Coordinator
Devon Baete, Field Operations Manager
Ben Waddle, Field Technician - South Central Region
Doug Larcombe, Field Technician - Southeast Region
Natasha Farfard, Field Technician - Northwest Region
Matthew Mangin, Field Technician - Southwest Region
Jack Large, Field Technician - Spruce Woods
Geoff Davison, Field Technician - Spruce Woods
James Spellman, Field Technician - Spruce Woods

Manitoba Pork

Cam Dahl, General Manager
Jenelle Hamblin, Director of Swine Health
Arne Thorlacius, Industry Services Coordinator
Michelle Casey, Finance Manager
Joey Dearborn, Communications Manager

Squeal on Pigs Manitoba receives funding from the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a partnership between the Government of Canada and all provinces, including the Province of Manitoba.

Introduction

2025 has been a highly successful year in our efforts to eradicate invasive Eurasian wild boar from Manitoba. Our efforts have focused on reducing the established free-living wild pig population in and around the Spruce Woods Park area, our most significant problem area. In addition, we have focussed on a small, but persistent resident population along northern Lake Manitoba.

Over the next year, our efforts in these areas will continue, but we remain ready to respond to wild pig sightings anywhere in the province. As outbreaks of African Swine Fever, a deadly disease of pigs, continue to spread throughout the world, we are developing emergency response plans to deal with any potential incursion of this disease in wild pigs.

The wild pig situation

It is important to keep a perspective on the wild pig issue in Canada. Most of the established wild pig populations are located in the prairie provinces, and almost all of these involve Eurasian wild boar or their hybrids. From the most recent map of wild pig occurrences in Canada, we can see that the problem areas follow the topography where agricultural land meets parkland. This is where resident wild pig populations find access to feed, water and shelter, and this is the situation that exists in the Spruce Woods area of Manitoba.

Wild pigs have significant negative effects on the natural environment with their destructive rooting behaviour and by consuming natural foods that other species rely upon. Experience here and abroad reinforces the observation that when wild pigs move in, native species, such as deer and turkeys, move out.

It is also important to understand that the wild pig population in Canada is vastly different from the wild pig population in warmer climates, such as the United States or Australia, and also immensely different from the wild boar population in Europe, where they are native. Spain experienced a recent outbreak of African Swine Fever in their wild boar population. Estimates of the wild boar population there exceed 2.4 million with population densities estimated to be 3 - 5 animals per square kilometre. Even in our most concentrated area of the wild pig population in Manitoba – the Spruce Woods Park area – our wild pig density is likely less than 10% of that figure.

This means that as we focus on removing the resident population in these areas, we will have made great strides towards our goal to eliminate invasive wild pigs from Manitoba.

2025 Key Activities

Strengthening Our Team

In addition to the field manager and program coordinator, we now have seven part-time field technicians. To bolster our operational capacity in the Spruce Woods area, we hired three additional seasonal field technicians to support our two existing technicians in that area. Further, one technician will concentrate on southwestern Manitoba, particularly the Turtle Mountains and the borders with the United States and Saskatchewan, and one will focus on the northern Lake Manitoba area.

Funding Support

Our funding agreement under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (SCAP) program will continue until March 2028, thanks to the support of the governments of Canada and Manitoba, and Manitoba Pork. Accessing stable, multi-year funding has allowed us to create an action plan that can build on successes year-over-year.

Regulatory Support

Squeal on Pigs Manitoba is not a government agency but we operate under Manitoba Pork, with the support of the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture. Thanks to regulatory changes in 2025 to the Wildlife Act and the Exotic Wildlife Regulations, possession of live Eurasian wild boar has now been prohibited. Under the regulations, all subspecies of live wild boar shall not be imported into the province, possessed, harboured, allowed to escape or released into the wild. In addition, any harvested wild boar must be reported to Squeal on Pigs Manitoba within seven days. This is a big step forward in the campaign to rid Manitoba of this invasive species.

Public Outreach and Knowledge Transfer

Informing stakeholders and the public regarding the threats posed by wild pigs to environmental health, animal health and human safety are ongoing efforts through our public outreach campaign. Numerous interviews and news articles in 2025 featured the Squeal on Pigs Manitoba program.

Media Interviews

Interviews on topics such as:

- Canadian Wild Pig Summit II, including surveillance techonologies
- 2024 National Wild Pig Map release
- Manitoba's response to wild pigs, population control, and ASF preparedness

Presentations

Delivery of in-person or video presentations including:

- Weed inspectors, Agricultural Associations and Environmental Interest Groups
- Schools, including an entire northern school district
- Brandon University master's class

Information Booths

Set-up in-person information booths at events such as:

- Royal Manitoba Winter Fair
- Manitoba Pork's Annual General Meeting
- Manitoba Beef Producers district meetings
- South Interlake Grain Day

Program Updates

Program updates and demonstrations were provided to:

- Department of Agriculture and Department of Natural Resources
- Field Day for Assiniboine College, Manitoba Agriculture, and Manitoba Natural Resources

Advertising Campaign

To reach the general public, Squeal on Pigs maintains:

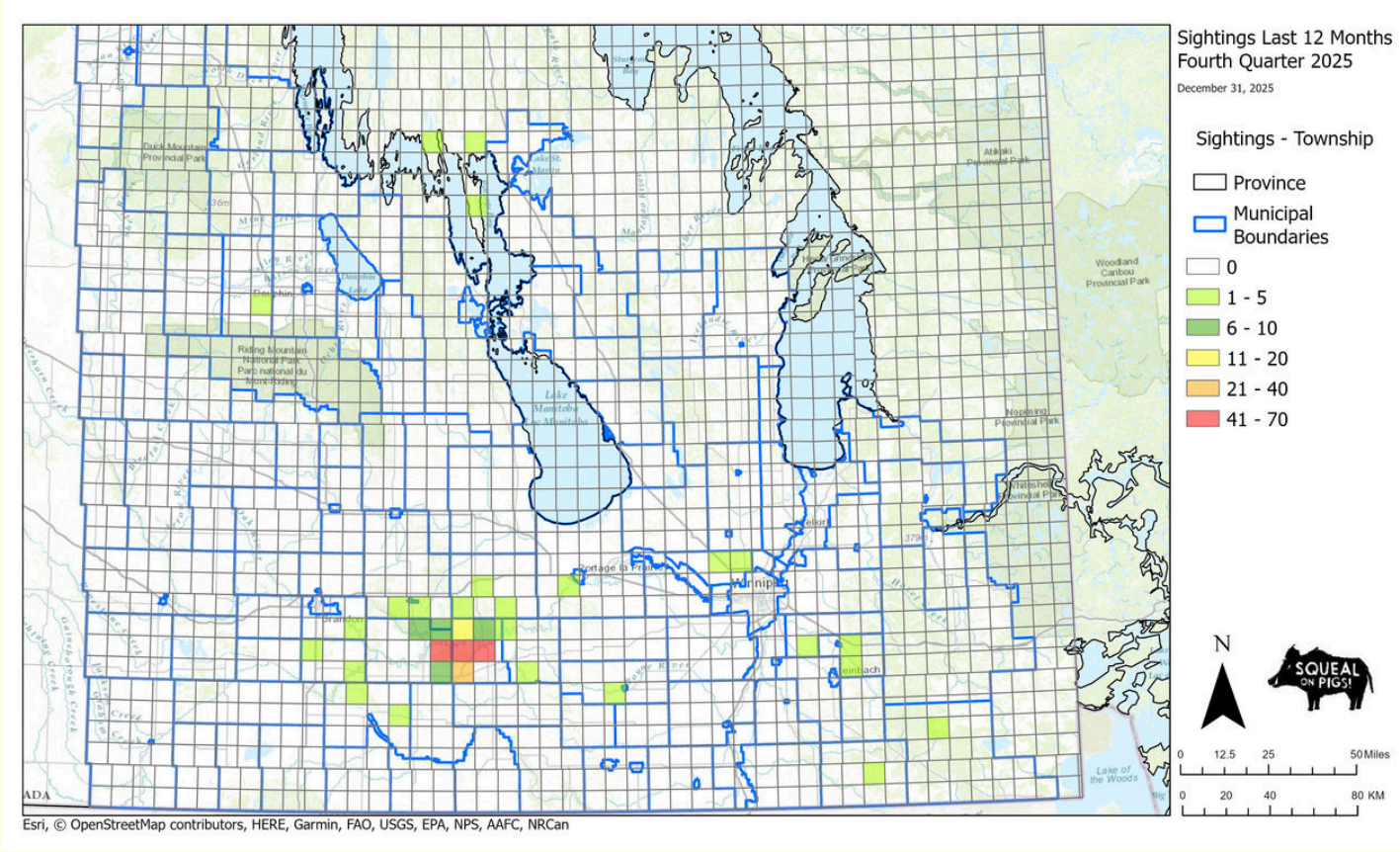
- squealonpigsmb.org, where sightings can be reported and the public can learn more about signs
- 1-800-SPOT-PIG hotline to receive reports
- Online marketing and print advertising to reach more Manitobans


Push and Shove
The Old Battle of Succession
DO NOT TOUCH THE MOUNTS


SQUEAL ON PIGS!
Surveillance Methods for Wild Pigs in a Cold Climate
Devon Baete – Field Operations Manager
Squeal on Pigs Manitoba

Geographic Areas of Focus

On our website, we publish quarterly updates of where wild pigs have been reported. As you can see, the Spruce Woods Park vicinity remains our most reported area of wild pig activity, but sporadic reports are received from other areas of the province. Most of the reports we receive from southeast Manitoba involve escaped domestic pigs, whereas those from western Manitoba are usually Eurasian wild boar. As part of our follow-up process, on average every month we talk to 250 landowners, deploy 100 trail cameras and have 25-30 traps in operation.



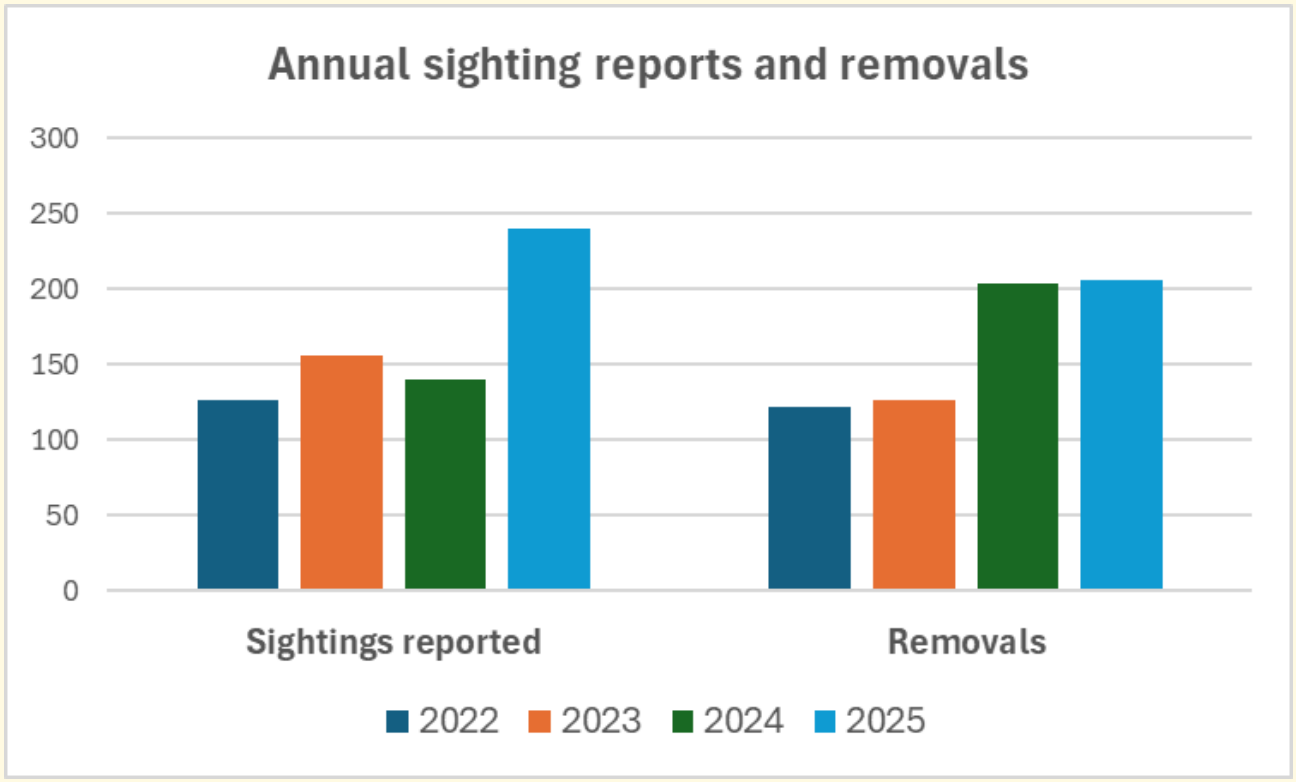
Field Operations Results

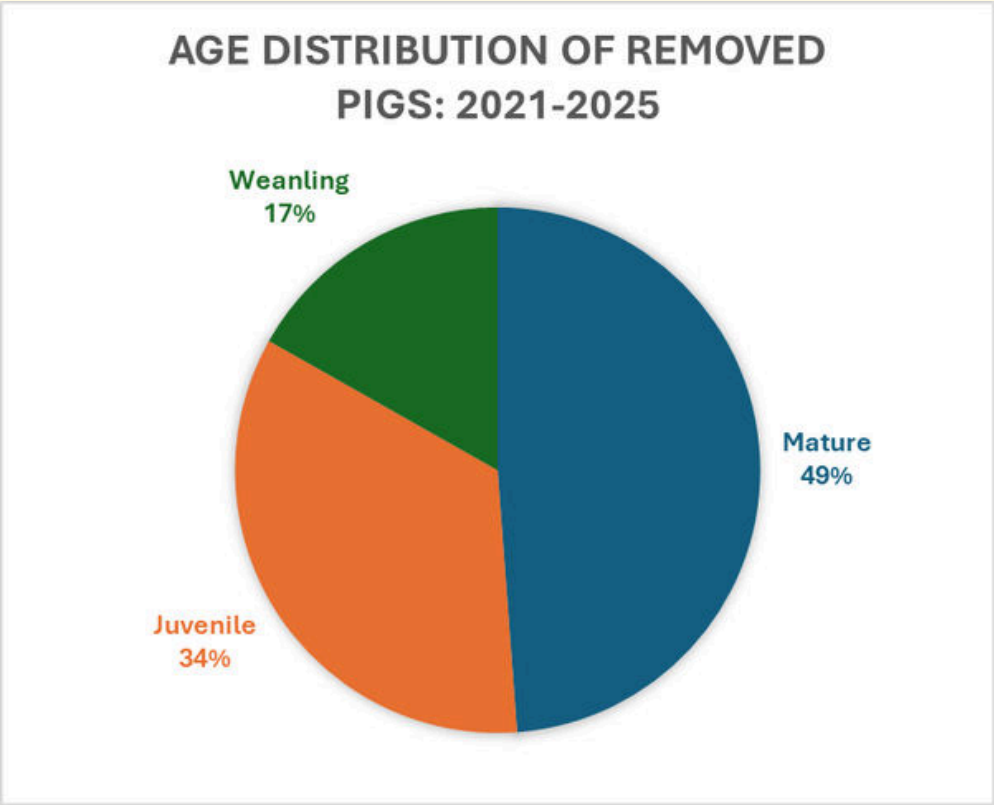
In 2025, 240 sightings were reported from all sources (public reports, drones, trail cameras).This is significantly higher due to increased surveillance of remote areas through our drone operations. There were 206 pigs removed in 2025, with a large part of the activity occurring in the winter months.We were especially successful using targeted removal in more remote areas to supplement the trapping activities.

Only 3 hunter kills were reported and none of these were associated with baited sites. Recreational hunting continues to be shown as largely ineffective, and it does interfere with trapping success. This has been corroborated in Spain where wild boar hunting has increased, but this has not impacted the wild boar population.

With the addition of the 2025 data, our age distribution breakdown remains similar to that presented in 2024. By consistently removing the mature breeding animals, we will have a significant effect on reducing the population going forward.

165 spleen samples were submitted under the CANSpot ASF program to demonstrate our freedom from African Swine Fever. This sampling program is essential to maintain confidence in Canada's ASF surveillance efforts in both domestic and wild pigs.





Information Management

Supported by Manitoba Pork, Squeal on Pigs Manitoba utilizes a centralized database to monitor sightings, field activities, camera locations and trap placements throughout the province.This purpose-built system is essential for both routine operations and emergency response to foreign animal disease outbreaks.

Field technicians collaborate in real time via Repromap applications, enabling efficient data sharing and activity coordination. Sightings and field activities information is collated and used to contribute to the national wild pig map, published by Animal Health Canada. For more information, visit www.animalhealthcanada.ca.

Field Tools

Drones

Thermal-imaging drones have been a game changer for our surveillance efforts. Drones have proven to be very effective in locating wild pigs which are often bedded under the cover of trees or within thick vegetation, like cattails or corn.

Highlights:

- 4 new drones purchased in 2025
- More flexible and cost-effective compared to contracted services
- Able to provide same-day scouting
- Rarely disturbs the natural behaviours of pigs
- Informs decisions for more effective camera and trap placement
- Able to conduct hundreds of flights per month

Environmental DNA Field Research

In partnership with James Hood from Assiniboine College, BDX Enviro, and Manitoba Pork, a field procedure is being developed to collect and test water for wild pig DNA.

Highlights:

- Unique work in Canada
- Useful to screen in or screen out more remote areas where sightings are less frequent
- Results from the last two years suggest that it is the most effective method tested, involved filtering 10 litres of water through a 600 cm^2 filter with a 0.22 µm pore size, applying a preservative at the water's edge, and analyzing the sample at BDX Enviro using polymerase chain reaction (PCR) techniques to detect pig DNA

Traps

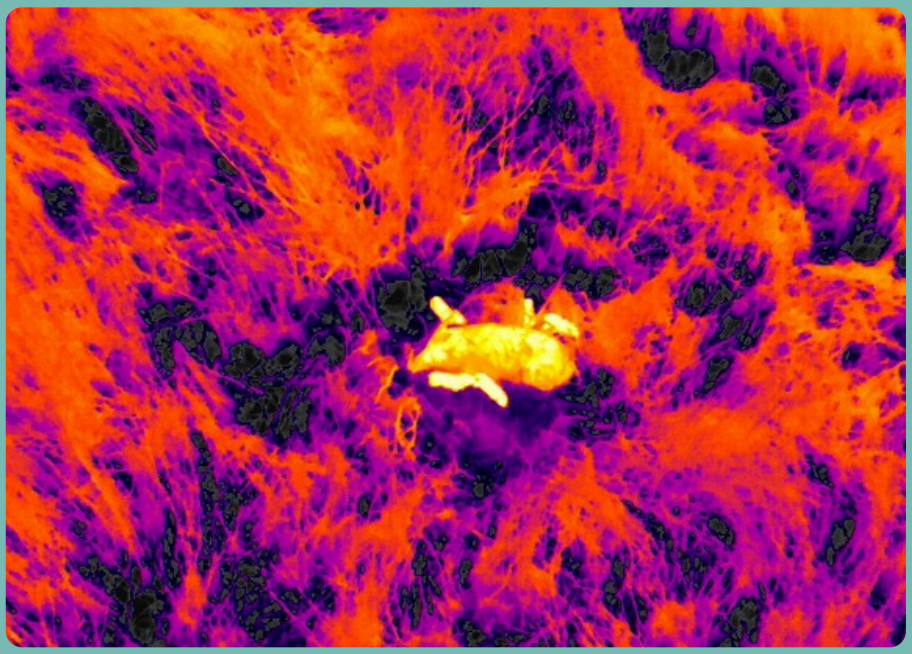
Landowner-based corral trapping remains a significant focus in our eradication efforts.

Highlights:

- Large, custom-made metal corral traps use mechanics that are much less prone to failure
- More reliable than systems that require cell service, battery power, or constant visual monitoring
- PigBrig net traps have proven to be very effective in winter and in remote areas

Other Tools

In conjunction with Manitoba Agriculture and PAMI, a modified snowmobile sled was developed to facilitate pig carcass removal in remote areas where vehicles cannot travel. A winch system was designed to assist with retrieval and loading in difficult, snow-covered terrain. Carcass containment and removal is the preferred method of biocontainment for African Swine Fever virus, which can survive for many months in tissues kept under cold conditions.



Environmental DNA Field Research

We continue to partner with James Hood from Assiniboine College to develop a field procedure to collect and test water for wild pig DNA. The collection methods have been quantified, and further work will continue to refine the sensitivity of the methods. Work is underway to use a Starlink camera system to record when pigs enter a stream so that DNA persistence in the water can be determined. This groundbreaking work is unique in Canada and will be very useful to screen in or screen out more remote areas where wild pigs may be and where there are few people to observe and report sightings.

Update on Testing of Environmental DNA Surveillance Methods for Wild Pigs in Manitoba by James Hood, Assiniboine College

Testing surface water for the presence of DNA shed from living things (known as environmental DNA or eDNA) is a method to determine whether a species has been present in a surface water body without relying on direct human observation.

Assiniboine College, Squeal on Pigs, BDX Enviro, and Manitoba Pork are collaborating on a project to evaluate whether sampling Manitoba surface waters can effectively detect wild pig eDNA. Results from the last two years suggest that it is the most effective method tested, involved filtering 10 litres of water through a 600 cm^2 filter with a 0.22 µm pore size, applying a preservative at the water's edge, and analyzing the sample at BDX Enviro using polymerase chain reaction (PCR) techniques to detect pig DNA. Triplicate sampling using the 600 cm^2, 0.22 µm pore size filter system detected pig eDNA 70% of the times it was expected to be present.

Efforts will focus on refining the protocol to improve detection rates in the coming field season. We anticipate that eDNA sampling, in conjunction with other monitoring methods, will be an effective tool for determining the presence of wild pigs within a watershed.

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National Collaboration

Manitoba participated in the working group coordinated by Animal Health Canada to create a wild pig map for the country. This was the culmination of the ad hoc working group formed at the first Wild Pig Summit. Following extensive discussion by the working group, definitions were agreed upon and the maps for 2023 and 2024 were published in 2025. It is anticipated that now that the schedule has been established, 2025 data will be made available in the first part of 2026.

Following the 2025 Wild Pig Summit held virtually, it was agreed that emergency response planning for incursions of foreign animal diseases in wild pigs would be the focus for the upcoming year. Manitoba's Squeal on Pigs volunteered to be the pilot to create a template that could be used by other provinces. Work has been ongoing to bridge the gap between domestic agriculture and wildlife agencies under the provincial Incident Command System to create a plan that will be effective in supporting the official responses of the province and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in respect of international World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) guidelines. This work will continue into 2026.

Manitoba also participated in the Animal Health Canada Forum held in Ottawa in September. We are pleased to congratulate Dr. Cassidy Klima as the new executive director, and we fully support Animal Health Canada in the role to coordinate the provincial wild pig control efforts under one national strategy.

Looking Ahead

Squeal on Pigs Manitoba will remain active in its efforts to inform the public and stakeholders on the devastating impacts of invasive wild pigs on the environment, on animal health and potentially on human safety. We will target key audiences to inform them of the best way to detect and control the wild pig population. In 2026 we will be erecting information signs in and around Spruce Woods Park to encourage the public to report wild pig sightings.

We will also continue to explore new knowledge and new technologies that contribute to our goal to eventually eliminate invasive wild pigs from the province. To achieve that we would like to better understand how pigs move within their home ranges, and how their social structure functions. This will enable us to establish control zones based on local knowledge in the event of a foreign animal disease outbreak.

As part of our emergency response to African swine fever, we will be exploring how to dispose of carcasses of infected pigs. The ASF virus is notoriously persistent in the environment, lasting months if not years in bones kept under cold conditions. This has very practical implications for our response in Manitoba. The traditional method of biocontainment in Europe has been to remove infected carcasses to a central processing/decontamination area. However, finding and removing wild pig carcasses deep in a forested area may prove to be extremely difficult. We are exploring the use of our thermal drones to detect carcasses, and we are examining alternative in situ decontamination options for instances when carcass removal is not a viable option.

Conclusion

As we enter the next operational phase of the Squeal on Pigs program, we will continue to ramp up detection and removal efforts in the established wild pig areas. This should have a significant impact on the persistence of wild pigs in the problem regions.

We have made significant progress over the last four years through applying the best practices and best science gleaned from elsewhere in the world. However, our situation in Canada is very, very different from warmer climates, so we will continue to adapt and modify our program and techniques to effectively control wild pigs under cold climate conditions.

Canada

Manitoba

ManitobaPork