

Feral hog ‘community of practice’ provides multi-state expertise, resources

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COLLEGE STATION – Texas AgriLife Extension Service, part of the Texas A&M University System, along with other land-grant university Extension entities and agencies in a multi-state Feral Hog Community of Practice, have launched an important new resource, said a top project participant.

“Through this community of practice, experts from across the nation will produce and convey critical information to the public about feral hogs through web-based resources,” said Dr. Jim Cathey, AgriLife Extension wildlife specialist who for the past year has served as leader for the effort. “We’re providing these resources through eXtension.org, an interactive learning environment that delivers objective, well-researched knowledge from some of the best minds within the nation’s land-grant university system.”

A multi-state, multi-organizational community of practice related to feral hogs has established web-based resources for sharing expertise and information on feral swine. (Texas AgriLife Extension Service photo)



The Feral Hog Community of Practice within eXtension.org is ready for viewing, Cathey said. To see the site, go to http://www.extension.org/feral_hogs.

Cathey said a “community of practice” is typically a group of professional educators with expertise in a topic or subject matter area who join together to address that area of mutual interest. It is usually a multi-institutional, multi-state and multi-disciplinary educational and informational effort to bring the best and most timely educational resources to the public.

“For the past year, our group has been developing educational resources for feral hog management and now those resources can be viewed by the general public,” Cathey said. “And while some of these resources are targeted toward the feral hog situation in Texas, other resources are specific to feral hog management in partnering states.”

Cathey said the website includes many creative resources aimed at the public and natural resource professionals. Through eXtension.org there are already 35 communities of practice related to other important public resource areas that can be viewed at <http://www.extension.org>.

“eXtension.org provides credible expertise, reliable answers based upon sound research, creative solutions to today’s complex challenges, and answers addressing users’ specific needs by means of trustworthy, field-tested data,” Cathey said.

“This new resource area on eXtension.org will concentrate on the control, adaptive management, biology, economics, disease risks and human interface relating to feral hogs across the U.S.,” Cathey

said. “The goal of this community of practice is to provide critical information, resources and expert application of knowledge to meet the demand for timely and accurate information, as well as provide a venue to bring experts together to deliver new ideas and strategies to reduce feral hog numbers.”

Leaders of this community of practice represent a mix of researchers, managers and Extension specialists, bridging the gap between research, management and outreach, he explained. Researchers and educators within universities and state and federal natural resource agencies also make up the community.

“The U.S. Department of Agriculture through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, as well as the national Cooperative Extension system, provided tools and resources to allow for creative collaboration among scientists and stakeholders to address important public issues like feral hogs,” he said.

Cathey said so far community of practice efforts related to feral hogs have led to recruiting 15 leaders and 38 members representing 17 states; resolving numerous Ask the Expert inquiries; face-to-face meetings; web trainings; developing a cache of FAQs, articles and videos; coordinating national feral hog webinars and creating a Feral Hog Community of Practice Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/FeralHogCoP> .

Cathey said those interested in joining the community may provide contact information and will be sent an invitation to join. They may then establish an eXtension ID and password to access the group.

“You do not have to work for Extension to participate,” Cathey said. “Resource professionals are welcome.”

He said some of the benefits of participation in the group include collaboration with peers from across the nation, reaching a large audience of Internet users and getting practical experience, while developing peer-reviewed articles and other materials to help hone professional writing skills.

To learn more about the Feral Hog Community of Practice, contact Cathey at 979-845-7471 or jccathey@tamu.edu.