

# Invasive Species Alert

## RUSSIAN BOAR

(SUS SCROFA)

### PROHIBITED IN MICHIGAN

#### IDENTIFICATION:

- Long, straight, narrow snout relative to domestic pigs.
- Dark-colored or camouflage coat.
- Light-tipped bristles.
- Dark point coloration on distal (hind) portions.

**HABITAT:** Russian boar in Michigan are typically associated with mixed forest and agricultural landscapes. Both hard mast and agricultural crops are prevalent in these habitats, and Russian boar use them extensively for feeding and loafing. Russian boar also use wetland habitats extensively year-round, particularly if they are in proximity to abundant food.

**NATIVE RANGE:** Europe and Asia.

**DIET:** Russian boar are opportunistic omnivores; they eat what they can when they can. Dietary items include crops, bird and reptile eggs, fawns and young of domestic livestock, tree seeds and seedlings, nuts, roots, and tubers.

**LOCAL CONCERN:** Russian boar can be aggressive toward humans and can transmit several serious diseases. Feeding habits put them in direct competition for resources with deer, bear, turkey, squirrel and waterfowl. Additionally, Russian boar use their sharp tusks to root for food and wallow in the dirt. These two activities destroy crops and native vegetation, negatively affect water quality, and can cause erosion.



**MEANS OF INTRODUCTION:** Intentional release, escape from domestication.

**THIS SPECIES IS ON MICHIGAN'S INVASIVE SPECIES WATCH LIST:** Report it at [MISIN.MSU.edu](https://MISIN.MSU.edu) or download the MISIN smartphone app and report it from your phone.

**OTHER NAMES:** Eurasian boar, feral swine, wild boar, wild hog, razorback.

**HYBRIDS AND GENETIC VARIANTS:** Russian boars can be crossbred with domestic pigs. The resulting animals and their progeny are considered Russian boar hybrids, or genetic variants of Russian boar, which are prohibited in the State of Michigan.

- Because Russian boar hybrids inherit traits from both their wild and domestic ancestors, they may not exhibit all the distinguishing features described above. To identify Russian boar hybrids, the animal's physical traits should be considered as a whole.
- Scientists working with U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Wildlife Research Center's Wildlife Genetics Project have also developed two genetic techniques that can be used to aid in the identification of Russian boars and Russian boar hybrids.[<sup>1</sup>] In general, these methods have the capacity to distinguish Russian boar hybrids from domestic pigs, with a high degree of certainty, if the animal possesses approximately 25% Russian boar ancestry.
- Ongoing advancements in science may provide additional phenotypic or genotypic tools to aid in the identification of Russian boars and their hybrids. These tools may be used as they become available.

[<sup>1</sup>] Smyser, T.J., et al. 2020. Mixed ancestry from wild and domestic lineages contributes to the rapid expansion of invasive feral swine. *Molecular Ecology* 29:1103-1119. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mec.15392>; Smyser, T.J., et al. 2024. Probabilistic genetic identification of wild boar hybridization to support control of invasive wild pigs (*Sus scrofa*). *Ecosphere* 15(2) e4474. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ecs2.4774>.

Photos courtesy of the U.S. Geological Survey, Bugwood.org (top) and Saxifraga - Jan van der Sraaten (bottom).