



OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Date: 02/12/2022

COORDINATION — ROUTING			
Div.	Name	Initial	Date
SP	Heather Hannusch	<i>[Signature]</i>	
SP	Lonnie Cook	<i>[Signature]</i>	04/29/22
SP	Todd McClanahan	<i>[Signature]</i>	5/2/22
Remarks:			
Return To:			

To: Todd McClanahan, Region 3 State Parks Director

From: Kelby Bridwell, Superintendent

Subject: Exotic and Feral Animal Management Plan

Re: Garner State Park

Exotic, feral and native animal control protocol for Garner State Park:

This document is intended to identify some site specific considerations at Garner State Park. It is a supplement to TPWD Procedure SP-PRO-4.B.3 and must be interpreted in congruence with the policy. **All actions will be in accordance with Texas Parks and Wildlife State Parks Division Procedure SP-PRO-4.B.3.**

Public Health/Safety Issues:

- 1) Feral hogs cause extensive soil, turf and trail disturbances by their rooting activities. Feral hogs also pose a risk to people including attacks on individuals or collisions with vehicles. Aggression is increased when feral hogs associate people with food. Garner has witnessed an increased frequency in human/feral animal contacts with feral hogs coming into visitors campsites with people and animals present to seek food and water.
- 2) Feral dogs are indiscriminate killers and when packing may pose a serious threat to the safety of park occupants.
- 3) Feral cats are indiscriminate killers of native species, including endangered birds present at the park.
- 4) Feral animals pose a threat to park visitors, pets and wildlife through transmission of harmful organisms and pathogens.
- 5) Squirrels and racoons can carry and transmit rabies along with other diseases and are often times found getting into people's food. Increased encounters and limited population control leads to habituations and development of nuisance animals. Altercations between domestic pets and racoons happen in state parks.
- 6) Domesticated "stray" animals are also found in state parks and pose similar health and safety risks.

Feral, Stray and Exotic Species have a negative and often disastrous impact on native plant and animal habitats and natural communities.

The following species are identified as needing managed in Garner State Park:

Brown-headed cowbirds: Cowbirds are referred to as a brood parasite. This means the female lays her eggs in the nests of other birds, abandoning them to the care of foster parents. The foster birds raise the cowbird chick to the detriment of their own young. Because the female cowbird can lay as many as 70 eggs per season, susceptible species of songbirds, such as the black-capped vireo are particularly at risk.

Feral hogs: represent the largest population of feral animals within the park and devastate native wildlife species through habitat destruction and direct competition for available food.

Feral dogs: represent a public safety issue as wild dogs can become aggressive when confronted by unsuspecting park visitors. Feral dogs also pose an operational impact if/when they get into household trash which can be found in abundance within the park.

Feral cats: can carry disease which can in turn be spread to native wildlife species. Feral cats have been known to

devastate populations of ground birds such as the native Bobwhite Quail, and are known to be the leading cause of numerous extinct species.

Exotic species: It is our intent to mitigate all species of exotic animals found within our boundaries. This list includes but is not limited to Axis, Fallow and Sika deer; Nutria, Aoudad sheep, Mouflon sheep, blackbuck antelope and other non-native species. Due to our high visitation these management efforts are mainly conducted through our annual public hunting opportunities. A small population of Axis deer are allowed to remain in the park due to their high value and interest for public hunting opportunities.

Lost and/or Stray Pets:

Lost or abandoned by their previous owners, stray animals may be found in state parks. These animals differ than feral animals in the sense they are habituated and often seek attention and interaction from humans. When identified these animals are usually collected by park staff and every effort is made to locate their owners or find them refuge through various interest groups. Stray animals may become feral animals when left in the wild.

Sick or Injured Wildlife:

Any animal deemed sick or injured to the point that it can no longer live a healthy life will be dispatched as humanely as possible regardless of species.

Visitor Safety Considerations when Managing Wildlife:

To ensure public safety as well as sustain good public relations every measure will be taken to avoid contact with park visitors during animal removal (preferably when the park is closed, unoccupied or with minimal visitation). Special Care and attention will be taken in regard to public safety when initiating removal in locations that are near or adjacent to park attractions; i.e., river, camping loops and trails. When possible, animals needing managed will be lured or pushed to non-public areas of the park. All removal will be as discreet as possible and as humane as possible. In cases of large-scale efforts to remove identified species all local Law enforcement agencies will be notified prior to implementation, along with local Game Warden, Wildlife division personnel (TPWD biologist) and State Parks regional office – including appropriate Regional Resource Coordinators. Small scale removal efforts (i.e., single animal removal) due to the nature and time constraints involved would not dictate the same chain of notification as the large scale efforts. Rather notification via radio or cell phone to park management would be the most appropriate notification.

Identified Species in need of control:

- Feral mammals to include but not limited to feral hogs and feral domestic cats.
The Park currently has a problem with feral hogs and feral domestic cats.
- Other exotic mammals as defined in Texas Parks and Wildlife Code.
- Sick and injured native, exotic, and feral animals

Methods of Removal:

- For feral hogs, the park utilizes live traps and pen traps. Once the feral hogs are trapped, the animals are humanly dispatched following Division Procedure SP-PRO-4.B.3
- For feral hogs and feral domestic cats - Appropriate and continual removal by firearm implemented by certified personnel on a case by case basis and upon approval of park and regional management will be utilized.

Feral and stray animals may be removed by park staff and volunteer organizations. If they can accept all risks, control and/or trap the animal safely and transport the animal to a shelter or receiving location that will ensure the safety of the transporter and animal and follow all State laws and local ordinances.

Time Frame:

- This memo will serve as authorization for use of firearms in state parks for control of wildlife as mentioned above, for one year following signed approval from Division Director or Deputy Director.

Employees Implementing Wildlife Management via Firearm:

Commissioned State Park Police Officers, Texas Game Wardens and certified non-law enforcement employees may use a firearm to dispatch a sick and/or injured wildlife following **SP-PRO-4.B.3.**

Non-law enforcement staff implementing removal will meet and maintain all required certifications to include:

- Name, Position, Emergency Contact information.
- Hunter Education
- Annual Firearm qualifications conducted by Regional Law Enforcement Firearms Instructor.
- Firearm approval (caliber and type)

All records will be kept for all animals dispatched following approved reporting methods as outlined by **SP-PRO-4.B.3.**

Current approved Garner State Park Staff:

- Sgt. Lynn Kuentler – PPO
- Officer Taylor Marburger – PPO
- Officer Chris Torres – PPO
- Kelby Bridwell, Park Superintendent/Hunt Master, Non-law enforcement

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TPWD MISSION: To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Garner SP - Feral Animal Plan_2022

Final Audit Report

2022-05-02

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