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MILITARY INNOVATIONS ADAPTED TO FERAL HOG CONTROL IN SW GEORGIA

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ABSTRACT: Advanced technology of our nation's military dominates the battlefield in combat. However, we are currently at war with feral hogs in our country and severely losing the battle in many states. Traditional methods are not effective. We have used lessons learned from experienced Soldiers to implement tactical strategies and design equipment for the four-legged feral enemy within our borders. Technical advances in thermal imaging equipment derived from military operations are being applied to feral hog control in southwest Georgia using first to civilian market infrared equipment. These infrared devices allow users to acquire and identify targets in total darkness out to ½ mile solely from their body heat. Other innovations in military technology such as long range radio frequency tracking systems and infrared trapping equipment have been instrumental to effectively reduce feral hog populations in southwest Georgia.

KEY WORDS: Feral hog, Georgia, wildlife control techniques, wildlife damage management

It is time to implement a National Feral Hog Control Program using the latest military technology with a strategic three-pronged attack:

1. The US Department of Agriculture Wildlife Service agents and state Task Force agencies will be trained for nocturnal operations and equipped with first to civilian market 640 x 480 resolution long range thermal spotting scopes to identify targets in total darkness out to ½ mile. Newly designed 320 x 240 resolution thermal scopes will be mounted to semi-automatic rifles to engage feral hogs in all types of vegetation.
2. Farmers and ranchers will be trained by county extension agents along with professional trappers to effectively use infrared trap doors on large corral traps with automatic feeders.
3. Hunters will be trained to execute year-round tactics using long distance radio frequency ear tag tracking systems during daytime operations.

We will hit our feral enemy with 24-hour operations from three separate forces using the latest military technologies. In addition, The US Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources law enforcement and county sheriff offices will help prosecute individuals illegally transporting and relocating feral hogs. It will take a focused battle plan from several states to implement a successful National Feral Hog Control Program.

COMMON FERAL HOG PROBLEMS

1. Reproduction

- Sexually mature at 6-8 months.
- Deliver first offspring prior to one year old.
- Produce two litters annually thereafter. No other large species is capable of producing multiple large litters every year starting at such an early age.
- We must deploy high volume removal techniques to control feral hog populations.



2. Hunters

- Perform illegal relocation of feral hogs.
- Conservation mindset is wrong approach.
- Day hunting is inefficient due to nocturnal feeding patterns and thick bedding habits.
- Traditional hunting is an unproductive method to control feral hog numbers.
- Must educate and equip hunters to be an effective control tool and STOP relocation.

STRATEGIC THREE-PRONGED SOLUTION

Adapt military equipment and technology to 24-hour feral hog control operations.

1. Employ infrared technology for night operations.
2. Employ infrared high volume trapping equipment.
3. Employ radio frequency tracking for day and night operations.

1. INFRARED TECHNOLOGY FOR NIGHT OPERATIONS

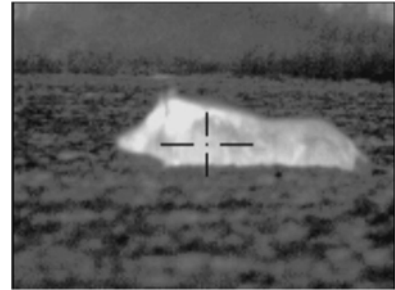
a. Infrared (Night Vision)

- i. Image enhancement: Collects visible light and lower portion of the infrared light spectrum which is “reflected” by objects.
- ii. Positives: Affordable \$2,000 - \$4,000 infrared technology.
- iii. Negatives: Short range <300 yards, NOT effective in tall vegetation






b. Thermal Imaging

- i. It captures the upper portion of the infrared light spectrum which is “emitted as heat” by objects.
- ii. Military grade 640 x 480 and 320 x 240 thermal scopes.
- iii. Positives: Long range <3/4 mile, highly effective in vegetation
- iv. Negatives: More expensive \$10,000 - \$15,000 technology



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|---|--|
| <p>Each three-person hog control team is equipped with one long range thermal spotting scope and three thermal rifle scopes. The best location to observe a problem field is at the highest elevation with the wind blowing in their face.</p> <p>Spotters should always use the same dominant shooting eye when peering through the long range scope. This will ensure the opposite eye always retains optimum night vision.</p> | |
| <p>The long range thermal spotting scope with 640 x 480 resolution can detect movement at 2,000 meters. Spotters will be able to distinguish hogs from deer, coyotes and cattle at 800 meters.</p> <p>This picture represents seven juveniles and two sows at 612 meters in the normal mode.</p> | |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>This picture represents the same seven juveniles and two sows at 612 meters using the 3x digital E-zoom magnification button.</p> <p>The 3x digital E-zoom will enable spotters to pinpoint exact species in a 150 acre field from a single location.</p> |  |
| <p>The team leader uses the long range spotting scope to lead the shooters single file at sling arms for safety. The team leader watches the body language of the animals to determine how close to stalk.</p> <p>Wind direction is the most important factor for scent control. It is also important for the shooters to move only when the team leader moves making one silhouette on the horizon.</p> |  |
| <p>The strategy is to stalk within 50 yards to kill the entire group. After the team leader takes a knee, shooters move up on his left and right for the shot.</p> <p>Operate on 3-2-1 countdown method for simultaneous first shots. The hogs will be running for follow-up shots. It is important to have pre-determined sectors of fire for safety and efficiency.</p> |  |

This picture represents the 320 x 240 resolution of a rifle scope at 50 meters.

Adults are targeted for the initial shot in the pre-determined sectors of fire to create chaos and a communication void in the sounder group. The confused juveniles will offer easier follow-up shots without adult direction.



2. HIGH VOLUME TRAPPING

- Sensor triggered doors with a variable time delay selection.



Door in Open Position



Door in Closed Position



Use corral traps large enough to capture an entire litter or sounder group at one time.

Pre-baiting with automatic feeders for 7-10 days is essential for high volume success.

Hogs will associate the automatic feeder as a food source over time and will begin to enter the area as a large group.



The circle shape has no corners for hogs to pile on top of each other and escape.

The trap doors are hinged to permit one-way operation only. This creates an opportunity to catch multiple groups in one setting by using the initial hogs as decoys.

3. RADIO FREQUENCY TRACKING FOR DAY AND NIGHT OPERATIONS.

Implement the “Judas Pig” technique by tagging young gilts for predictable long-range location of entire sounder groups; day and night.

a. EAR TAG TRANSMITTER

- One year battery life. User may replace without returning to manufacturer.
- 2-4 mile signal using receiver only.
- Long range signal of 10+ miles using a yagi antenna on the receiver.
- Unlimited use for both juvenile and adult hogs.
- Custom frequencies for dog hunters owning other receivers.



b. RF TRACKING RECEIVER

- World's smallest, lightest and most portable.
- Stores up to 100 transmitter frequencies.
- Connects to yagi and omni antennas using SMA connector.
- Reports signal strength by both audible signal and bars on an LCD screen.
- Hi/lo mode for near tracking.
- Frequency fine tune through programming.



NATIONAL FERAL HOG CONTROL PROGRAM (PARTICIPANTS)

Employ 24-hour operations by separate groups implementing three different technologies.

- Night Operations- Federal & State Wildlife Service agents
- Trapping- County Extension agent training for trappers, farmers and ranchers
- Day Operations- Hunters (traditional and dogs)

THE FIVE KEYS TO SUCCESS

1. Change legislation to make feral hogs a non-game, invasive species nationwide.
2. Allow DNR to assist USDA to catch and prosecute individuals relocating feral hogs.
3. State & Federal Wildlife Services to finance equipment and training for night operations.
4. Landowner cooperation for all trapping & hunting operations.
5. Traditional & dog hunters will implement year-round day operations using radio telemetry.

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