



Feral Hog Herald

Issue #2

Quarterly newsletter of the
Feral Hog Elimination Partnership

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Educator Spotlight: Meet Jerry!

Jerry Richards, a Missouri Ozarks native, is a retired high school teacher and cow/calf farmer on a 500-acre century farm. He has experienced first-hand the devastation caused by feral hogs, and he aims to help others find the help they need.



What drew you to the Feral Hog Educator Position with MU extension?

About three years ago I began having a serious feral hog problem on my 500-acre cattle farm in southwestern Washington County. I contacted the MDC and they, under the direction of Tom Meister, came out and set up traps that I began to maintain. I had a lot of success and visited a lot with Tom concerning techniques, strategies, public perceptions, etc. I also wound up on the front page

of the St. Louis Post Dispatch, in Missouri Conservationist magazine, on a podcast, writing some testimonial letters, etc. When the positions were created, Tom said that he would like recommend me for one of the positions, and it sounded interesting and challenging. It just seemed like a good fit as far as what they were looking for and what I could bring to the table.

Tell us a little about your background.

I was raised on a 500-acre Century Farm (in our family since 1918) in rural Washington County. While growing up my dad was the county sheriff for 24 years, so I split my time between residing in the "living quarters" of the jail on main street in Potosi and living on the farm in the middle of the Mark Twain National Forest. I graduated from Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau with a degree in Business Education (Marketing Emphasis) and taught for 30 years at Potosi High School. While teaching I was Student Council sponsor and developed a Leadership program that let us do lots of fun, engaging activities with kids while teaching them leadership skills. This has led to lifetime friendships with many of them. I've continued to live on the farm and raise beef cattle my entire life. Also, I have been an active motorcyclist since the early 1970's and have spent my free time safely and QUIETLY exploring the backroads of our beautiful country. I ride dual-purpose (street/trail) bikes that give me access to remote locations.

As someone who has been working with landowners for 6 months now, what are you

finding is the common link that draws landowners into the Feral Hog Task Force?

They are basically just shocked by what has happened to their land, and are looking for SOMEONE to help them. Much like a tornado

victim, they were in no way prepared for what came down on them and are looking for help that they haven't needed before. And they are getting recurring damage; it's not like a tornado where you can rebuild a barn and go on.....you may be hit time after time.

Have you been met with resistance from landowners? How have you addressed that?

I actually haven't met with resistance from landowners who have entered the program. They have been quite gracious and welcoming. The resistance I HAVE met with has come from people who just primarily want to complain about the fact that they don't agree with the no hunting on government lands policy, and they question the very existence of having a program like this. My fallback position is that this is a free service that that they can take advantage of if they want to with no obligations. If they are not interested, I still wish them a good day.

What would you say to someone considering contacting MDC or USDA for help with feral hogs?

They have NOTHING to lose and a lot to potentially gain. I will explain everything we will do for them, step by step, and they have the option of opting out at any time. It's hard to turn down FREE!

To report feral hog damage or receive assistance, call the Missouri Department of Conservation at **573-533-4115 ext. 3296**, or visit us on the web at <http://mcd.mo.gov/feralhog>.

