

In Search of a Better Feral Pig Trap: A Modification in Trap Door Designs

By William M. Brock

In Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, feral pig control has taken top priority in resource management efforts. At present, feral pigs are found in all habitats except for alpine stone deserts, barren lava flows and cinder fields, some arid coastal zones and urbanized areas. They occupy rain forests, mesic forests, seasonal montane forest, shrubland and open grassland habitats – in all, about 22,500 ha or 25 percent of the park.

Pig impacts are well documented in the park (Baker, 1979). They destroy understory plants in the forests and shrublands, and enhance the spread of alien plant species. Through their rooting and wallowing habits they create pockets of standing water that breed mosquitoes, a vector of avian malaria which decimates native forest birds.

Trapping is being explored as one tool in an arsenal of techniques to eliminate feral pigs. Trapping has been effective in controlling feral pigs in other areas and a variety of combinations of trap styles, door designs and tripping mechanisms have been reported in the literature (Diong, 1980). A basic trap design is a corral type (Hone and O'Grady, 1980). This design incorporates a small, permanent corral, equipped with a one-way door. Because of its size and door design, this trap permits multiple captures. The key to the multicapture effectiveness of this trap is the door design. In its simplest form, the door is merely a hinged plywood panel which swings only in one direction, permitting a pig to enter but not escape.

At Hawaii Volcanoes we have refined this traditional door design to attract animals which have become wary of traps. The door we developed utilizes a series of independently, one way swinging bars (Fig. 1). The bars swing on a rod that passes through holes drilled in the bars. These holes are drilled to close tolerance to prevent lateral movement in the bars. Space between the bars is maintained by spacer sleeves. Washers between the spacer and the bar make for smoother opening. The advantages of the bars over the traditional plywood panel door is that they provide a "visual cue" to the bait inside the trap and the pig need only move as many bars as necessary to enter. Because the bars move independently they tend to "drape" over the animal resisting the tendency for a pig to back out of the trap once the door is lifted. Slots at the bottom of the door provide a resting place for

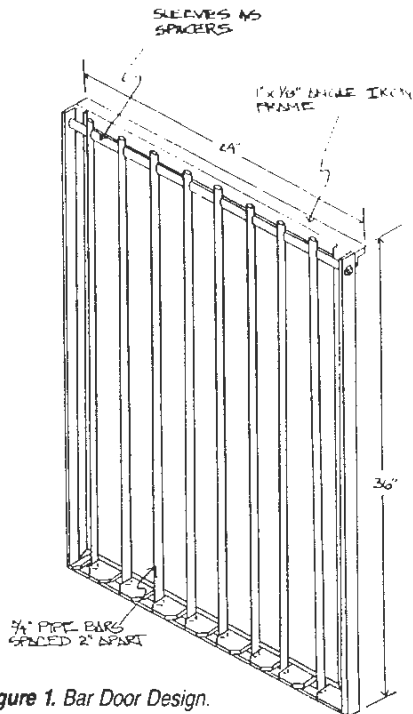


Figure 1. Bar Door Design.

the bars and help prevent lifting and escape.

This door has been tested successfully and is currently used strategically with other techniques to eliminate animals within control units.

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