

Cellular technology secures property, traps feral hogs



Cell phones are a hunter's newest weapon in the battle to protect ranches and leases against trespass and feral hog damage.

"Ranches and hunting leases are big investments," said Noel Gouldin, president of CellGate and Wireless Traps and co-founder of CelAccess, a Dallas-based technology company. "In Texas, hunting generates \$1.5 billion annually, meaning enthusiasts are putting their money where their passion is. It just makes sense to protect that investment by preventing trespass and managing the feral hog population to limit damage."

It is estimated that feral hogs cause \$52 million worth of agricultural damages in Texas annually.

Today, thanks to two new cellular applications, landowners and hunters have new weapons in their arsenal. Using cutting-edge technology from CellGate and Wireless Traps, landowners and hunters can secure their property and/or remotely trap feral hogs as easily as making a cell phone call.

The company first developed a sophisticated, but easy-to-use, cellular technology that is now protecting the Port of Houston, airports, manufacturing facilities, and other places where it is imperative that people know who is coming and going. In 2010, a cellular camera was added to the suite, which allowed people to not only control access, but to see who was on their property.

"Texas has become an urban state, meaning that many of the people who care for and enjoy rural land, don't live on the property full-time," Gouldin said. "Absence may make the heart grow fonder, but it can also make people feel helpless because absentee landowners or leaseholders have no direct control over their treasured asset. We developed a product that delivers peace of mind."

Securing Access with CellGate

"Landowners want two things: to control access to their property and to know who enters when," Gouldin said. "A ring of padlocks and a handful of keys is not the most effective way to control access or protect your assets, especially in areas where oilfield activity has skyrocketed, increasing traffic on ranches. Once someone knows the combination to a lock, you no longer control who enters."

CellGate's answer was to create a patent pending access control system based on cellular technology, allowing it to work virtually anywhere without the need for phone or data lines. The result is a three-part system: a "smart" keypad that can be installed to almost any existing gate, a camera to capture pictures and a Web-based application available on the Internet. Additional components can be added to customize and further enhance the system's capabilities. It is powered by solar panels or AC current, and can work on manual gates or gates equipped with

motorized gate operators.

Once the equipment is installed, the owners, using simple tools on the company's Web site, create personalized four-digit access codes for everyone who has permission to access the property. Using the Internet allows codes to be created or deleted anywhere with any Web-enabled device.

When people arrive at the ranch gate, they enter their access code using the keypad or their cell phones. Every time an access code is entered, a record is made on the Web site including date, time and who entered. The system can even notify the owner by e-mail, text message or phone call. If the camera option is added, it takes a picture of the vehicle. System owners can choose to have the photos delivered to their cell phones or computers immediately.

"To maximize security, we recommend that each person be given an individual code," Gouldin said. "They will use that code to enter and leave the ranch, automatically creating a digital record."

The access codes, which consist of at least four-digits, can be limited for a certain number of uses, for a defined date and time range, for specific days of the week, or, they can be unlimited, remaining valid until they are canceled. If a person who has been issued a time-limited access code attempts to use the code outside the limits or after it has expired, the system records those unsuccessful attempts as well.

"Obviously, you want service people to enter the property to do their jobs," Gouldin said. "But you don't want them to come back after hours and help themselves to a trophy buck."

The CellGate system can also monitor whether the gate is open or closed, plus it can be configured to send a notification if the gate is left open.

"You not only know when your gate is open, but who left it open – the last person to enter an access code," Gouldin said.

Most of CellGate's clients are ranchers, who are protecting their livestock and wildlife by controlling access to their land, but the application possibilities are limitless. One customer has built a bed-and-breakfast on his ranch and installed a CellGate system on the yard gate to help keep track of the guests. Another South Texas rancher uses a combination of motion detector and camera to monitor oilfield construction on his property. On occasion, landowners have spotted trespassers and contacted local authorities to deal with the intrusion while the trespassers were still on the premises. A Central Texas couple, who raise exotic wildlife and livestock, have positioned a CellGate camera so it photographs incoming and outgoing trailers, ensuring that no one is leaving with hoofstock they haven't purchased.

The combination of immediate notification, digital and photographic records, offers ranch

phone call. The system is powered by solar panels, which some people supplement with deep cycle marine batteries. Cell phone boosters also are available to enhance spotty cell phone coverage.

When the hogs enter the trap, it triggers the motion detector and camera, which begins taking pictures. The user is notified by e-mail or text message that the equipment has been activated. The user can then review the photographs and determine whether or not to close the trap gate. To close the trap, the user just enters the appropriate code into his cell phone or computer to activate the trap wherever he is.

George Dixon operates a hunting ranch near Magnolia, Ark., and traps nuisance hogs throughout the region using the system.

"In my opinion, it's the best thing since sliced bread and a pocket on a shirt," he said. "It makes no difference where I am, I receive a text or e-mail and I can check and see what's in my trap."

According to Dixon, the equipment is durable and easy to use. Plus, the photos allow him to see exactly what is in the trap, so he avoids trapping non-target species like deer and knows how big of a trailer to bring when it's time to pick up the hogs.

But the system's biggest benefits are cost savings and the ability to trap entire family groups.

"With a traditional trap, you have to drive to the location every day and check to see if there are hogs," Dixon said. "With wireless traps, you don't have to return to the trap except to replace bait or pick up the animals. It saves time and gas and, therefore, money."

One reason that feral hogs are hard to control is that they are smart. They travel in family groups called sounders. If a trapper



owners, particularly those who live off their properties, more direct control over access and the power of information.

"If a landowner operates day hunts or package hunts, the system will provide a powerful management tool," Gouldin said. "If a group leases a ranch and allocates use based on time, the system can provide objective records and help enforce the agreed upon time-share."

Managing feral hogs with wireless traps

Last year, the innovators at CelAccess took the technology a step further when the system was modified to allow people to remotely monitor and trigger trap gates.

"With Texas' feral hog population estimated to be about 3.4 million animals — and growing, we saw an opportunity to give land managers a technological advantage in the battle to keep the hogs' marauding in check," Gouldin said.

"Many hunters enjoy shooting the occasional hog or trapping them, often in small cage-style traps," Gouldin said. "With prices for feral pigs at around 40 cents a pound, some are turning their hobby into a moneymaker."

Unfortunately, hunting and trapping with cage-style traps does little to control the population growth. In order to be more effective, a corral-style trap with a constant feed source like a deer feeder is needed.

"Traditional style head gates still leave the hogs in control of how many get caught and when," Gouldin said. "The first ones in trip the gate and get caught while the rest of the group gets away, making the remainder of the group trap-shy."

Wireless Traps puts a human in control of how many hogs are caught and when, by combining a camera with infrared illuminators, motion detector and a remote-controlled lock that can be triggered with a cell



only catches a portion of a sounder, the rest of the hogs become trap-shy, Dixon said.

"With this system, I can be patient," Dixon said. "I will wait and watch over the course of several days because each night more hogs come in. I don't close the trap until I'm sure that I've gotten every hog in the bunch."

"Most of the time when you buy something, it's not what it's cracked up to be. I'm not sure that I could add anything to this system to make it better. It delivers."

CellGate
Cell-gate.com • (855) 694-2837

Wireless Traps
Wirelesstraps.com • (855) 698-7277