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## Javelinas

The javelina (*Pecari tajacu*), or collared peccary, is common across much of Yavapai County. However, javelinas are a relatively recent arrival in Arizona. Javelina bones are not found in Arizona archaeological sites and early European settlers made infrequent references to their occurrence. Today, the javelina's range is from below the Mogollon Rim in Arizona eastward to parts of New Mexico and Texas and southward to Argentina. They have also found their way into Flagstaff within the last few years.



Photo by Donna Davis, Yavapai County Master Gardener

Adult javelinas generally weigh 35 to 60 lbs., the male being slightly heavier than the female. They acquire adult coloration at three months. Javelinas continue to grow until they reach adult height in about 10 months. At this age, the javelina is sexually mature. While javelinas have lived to 24 years in captivity, the average life span is closer to seven or eight years. Javelinas have very close social relationships. They live in herds (sometimes called "sounders") of 5 to 15 animals which usually eat, sleep, and forage together. Predation on javelina is common from mountain lions and bobcats.

Being of tropical origin, peccaries are capable of breeding throughout the year and can have two litters per year when habitat and weather are favorable. In Arizona, breeding peaks in January, February, and March. After a 145-day gestation period, most births occur in June, July, and August to coincide with the summer monsoon season. New born javelinas weigh about one pound and are tan to brownish in color with a reddish dorsal stripe. Two is the most common number of young. The young follow their mother shortly after birth and are usually weaned at six weeks.

Javelinas designate their territory by rubbing their rump oil gland against rocks, tree trunks, and stumps; this leaves smears of an oily fluid with a musky smell as a marker. In greeting, 2 group members frequently rub each other, head to rump. Both sexes actively defend the home range. Javelinas fend off adversaries by squaring off, laying back their ears, and clattering their canines. In fight, they charge head on, bite, and occasionally lock jaws. Pet dogs are often viewed as predators, subsequently attacked, and can be seriously injured or killed by javelinas.

Since javelinas are found across so many habitat types, their foods vary greatly. Javelinas are opportunistic feeders eating flowers, fruits, nuts, berries, bulbs, and many succulent plants. In Arizona, prickly pear cactus makes up the major portion of the diet. However, they are also known to occasionally eat eggs, carrion, snakes, fish, and frogs. Our gardens and landscapes often present them with succulent, novel foods which can lead to great consternation by the owners.

The most effective way to prevent javelina damage to gardens and landscapes is to exclude them using a sturdy, four-foot tall fence. In situations where solid fences are not feasible, electric fences can be used. A single wire 8 to 10 inches above the ground is most effective. However, given the javelina's thick fur and shear strength, this strategy is not always successful.

Food and water attract javelina. Many people feed wild birds and birdseed scattered on the ground is an attractant. To minimize this situation, avoid inexpensive birdseed which contains a large percentage of milo. Pets should be fed indoors. It is essential that people do not intentionally feed javelina (and other non-avian wildlife). When this is done, wildlife can alter their natural feeding behavior and become habituated to humans. It is important that all wildlife fear humans for their own protection and wellbeing.

Javelinas are a game animal and may not be harmed or hunted without a valid license (consult the Arizona Game and Fish Department for regulations and information).

## Additional Resources

[Javelina Resistance Plants](#), University of Arizona

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Adapted from original Backyard Gardener publications by Jeff Schalau, Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, Yavapai County

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