

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

February 2026

It is a common misconception that pigs and feral hogs were introduced to Texas in the 1600s, but truly they first came with the arrival of Spanish conquistador Ponce de Leon in Florida 100 years prior. He brought over an abundance of domesticated pigs and feral hogs to be used as food for his party and released them into the wild once they reached the coast of Florida. His plan was to build a colony but would early on be pushed out by the Calusa people. The Seminoles took it upon themselves to take advantage of the animals he brought over, which along with pigs included cattle and horses. This would be the start of a new Seminole tradition: cattle ranching and to a lesser extent, pig farming. This artifact was found on a camp in Brighton, possibly a descendent from the hogs brought by De Leon.

When the federal government attempted to remove the Seminoles, the pigs, cattle and horses were a helpful part in their being able to resist. The horses helped them evade abduction and the cattle and pigs helped them stay well nourished ([Johnston, 2025](#)). Since the pigs were already domesticated they were easy to care for, but feral hogs remained as well. What's the difference? Selective breeding practices made pigs more agile, their builds slimmer than their feral counterparts. Hogs have thicker builds, helping them forage and defend themselves against predators.

It is difficult to determine whether this artifact is the teeth of a feral hog or a domesticated pig. Both animals were utilized by the Seminoles for both farming and hunting; the teeth look similar when placed side by side. Based on the larger size of the artifact, it's more likely they are the teeth of a feral hog. Hog teeth are known to be larger and sharper than domesticated pig. Domesticated pigs have duller teeth because of selective breeding as well as being dependent on humans for food. The food of domesticated pigs is typically made up of fish meal, grains, and various fruits and vegetables, while feral hogs are more carnivorous, hunting a range of mammals from rats to small deer ([Wildlife Damage Management, 2019](#)).



Figure 1: THPO artifact



Figure 2: pig teeth



Figure 3: hog teeth

Johnston, Gene (2025). *America's Oldest Cattle Legacy Lives on With the Seminoles. Successful Farming.* <https://www.agriculture.com/america-s-oldest-cattle-legacy-lives-on-with-the-seminoles-11811721>
Wildlife Damage Management (2019). *Food Habits of Feral Hogs.* <https://wildlife-damage-management.extension.org/food-habits-of-feral-hogs/>

