

Media Release



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NPA PRESS RELEASE

NPA calls for proper controls on soaring Forest of Dean feral wild boar population

The National Pig Association (NPA) is calling for more concerted efforts to control feral wild boar in the Forest of Dean in response to the threat the rising population poses to commercial pigs.

The NPA is joining forces with the Deer Initiative to host a wild boar summit in January to discuss possible solutions to the worsening situation.

The latest cull of wild boar in the Gloucestershire and Herefordshire forest has clearly failed despite the sterling efforts of local Forest Services staff.

The most recent survey figures, from March 2016, estimated there were 1,562 feral wild boar roaming the forest, equating to about 21 per sq.km, 50 per cent up on the 2015 estimate. Populations of wild boar are also spreading to new areas.

The surge in numbers occurred despite a cull of more than 400 wild boar in the forest and experts are warning the population could hit 10,000 within a few years unless proper controls are put in place.

The Forestry Commission is continuing to cull wild boar this year but local resources are stretched. The Deer Initiative, which helps manage deer populations in England and Wales, now, for the first time, has no funding for wild boar.

The NPA believes the situation now warrants a more effective and co-ordinated control policy, with the support of Defra.

Genuine threat

NPA chief executive Dr Zoe Davies said: “Feral wild boar pose a very genuine threat to the British pig industry.

“These pigs are gaining access to waste food when they root around in household bins and at picnic sites. We need to be mindful that in Eastern Europe wild boar have been integral in the spread of the deadly African swine fever (ASF) virus.

“If an exotic disease like ASF got into the UK’s wild boar population, it would become almost impossible to prove that the disease had been stamped out. This would wreck our burgeoning export market, now worth £350 million a year, with devastating consequences for the industry.”

“In addition, local businesses and tourism would suffer greatly as the whole area would be under restriction indefinitely. We only need to look back to the last foot-and-mouth disease outbreak to know exactly what impact this can have on local communities.”

Wild boar have increasingly been causing havoc among the general public, with reports of animals wandering around town centres, wrecking bins and gardens and chasing dog walkers. There have been 49 wild boar-related road traffic accidents in the area recorded since April.

Wild boar summit

Dr Davies explained why the NPA had offered to work with the Deer Initiative, and fund a wild boar summit.

She said: “We want to highlight to MPs and bodies like Natural England, Defra and the Forestry Commission the wider implications of further feral wild boar population growth on the pig industry, as well as the wider impact on local communities.

“We will be encouraging local landowners to join forces and help the Forestry Commission to properly control the population and prevent further spread.

“But we also need co-ordinated action. Defra believes that wild boar control should be the responsibility of the landowner. We are therefore calling for Defra to put pressure on the Forestry Commission, as responsible landowner of a significant proportion of the Forest of Dean, to carry out an efficient cull that is properly resourced.

“The wild boar population is expanding because the conditions - warm winters, plentiful food and no natural predators – are ideal. The Deer Initiative predicts the population could reach 10,000 by 2020 unless proper controls are put in place. That would not be in anybody’s interests.”

Notes to editors

- The latest survey on feral wild boar in the Forest of Dean estimated there had been a 50 per cent increase in numbers to 1,562 over the course of a year. More details can be seen [here](#)
- African swine fever (ASF) is continuing to cause problems across eastern Europe, with new cases identified in four countries in the past few weeks including the first ever cases in Moldova. Wild boar are playing a significant part in the spread of the disease, prompting calls for a cull in Russia. For more information [click here](#)
- Wild boar are [also causing problems for local residents](#) in Gloucestershire.

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