

# NPA BRIEFING



**Date:** August 2016  
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## NPA briefing note on wild boar

### Issue:

The number of feral wild boar present in the British countryside is thought to be increasing and efforts to control the population have not been successful. These animals pose a significant disease threat to the commercial pig herd.

### Background:

- In England, feral wild boar are present on the public forest estate in Kent and Sussex (Forestry Commission (FC) South East England) and in Gloucestershire and Herefordshire (FC Forest of Dean).
- Wild boar are capable of rapid population increases due to the early onset of sexual maturity, their ability to have large litters and potential to breed more than once a year. They are also able to disperse widely and with the exception of young piglets, have no natural predators in England.
- A census of the wild boar population in the Forest of Dean undertaken in Spring 2014 estimated that there were at least 800 boar currently within the core area <sup>[1]</sup>. A repeat of the census in Spring 2015 estimated there to be 1000 <sup>[2]</sup>. In 2016 this number had risen substantially, by 48%, to 1560 <sup>[3]</sup>.
- A population of more than 400 animals is thought to be capable of successfully circulating Classical Swine Fever <sup>[4]</sup>.
- Therefore, following an outbreak of a notifiable disease near to the Forest of Dean, it would be impossible to return to a status of 'freedom from disease', which is necessary to have movement restrictions lifted and the ability to export pigmeat to other countries (a market that is worth ~£350 million), unless all of the boar were culled. Achieving this would be extremely difficult.
- African Swine Fever is currently spreading rapidly through populations of feral wild boar in a number of Eastern European countries, demonstrating the ability of this species to spread exotic notifiable disease.
- Wild boar can and do gain access to pig farms, where they steal food and mate with sows, therefore the potential for disease spread is considerable.
- In addition to the disease risk, feral wild boar are also responsible for a considerable number of serious road traffic accidents causing fatality or serious injury to humans and there have been recent reports of wild boar attacking livestock <sup>[5]</sup>.
- Defra's approach to management of the feral wild boar population in England is detailed in an action plan produced in 2008. This policy outlines "that primary responsibility for feral wild boar management lies with local communities and individual landowners. However, Government will help facilitate this regional management through provision of guidance and advice" <sup>[6]</sup>

- The Deer Initiative provides advice to Defra on managing wild boar populations and has produced some helpful guidelines both for keeping farmed wild boar in and feral wild boar out. They can be found here: [http://www.wild-boar.org.uk/guide\\_list/](http://www.wild-boar.org.uk/guide_list/)
- A deer & wild boar management committee has also been established, primarily to focus on wild boar in key areas such as the Forest of Dean and the Wye Valley. The management committee comprises the NFU, CLA, Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission and the Deer Initiative.
- The committee have agreed a culling regime in the Forest of Dean, which has been approved by all stakeholders including the RSPCA and RSPB to reduce the number of wild boar to a 'sustainable population'. However, despite 422 boars out of the target of 460 being culled between the 2015 and 2016 census, further increases in the population have not been contained <sup>[3]</sup>.
- The keeping of wild boar is covered by the Dangerous Wild Animals Act (2007)<sup>[7]</sup>. Keepers must obtain a license to do so from their Local Authority and adhere to specific conditions such as minimum fencing requirements.

### NPA position:

- The ever-expanding wild boar population in the Forest of Dean poses a significant threat to the health of commercial pigs and, in the event of a notifiable disease outbreak, risks the UK pig industry losing its export market – something that would be extremely difficult to regain.
- The number of wild boar in established populations in England has increased considerably (from 500 to >1500) since the Defra 2008 action plan was published. As such, NPA would urge Defra to publish and act upon the revised action plan once produced by the Deer Initiative.
- A more coordinated and effective approach to management of wild boar populations is urgently required. NPA believes it is vital that Defra allocates appropriate resources, including financial support, to the proper management of these animals.
- NPA also urges Defra to review the Dangerous Wild Animals Act to include wild boar crosses and properly defined criteria for a licence, such as fencing requirements. Also, there needs to be a central record of the number and location of farmed wild boar, which there currently isn't.
- Members are urged to help the Deer Initiative track new sightings of wild boar by entering any information here: [http://www.wild-boar.org.uk/report\\_a\\_sighting/](http://www.wild-boar.org.uk/report_a_sighting/)

### References

<sup>[1]</sup>[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/WildBoarDeerCensusDean2014.pdf/\\$file/WildBoarDeerCensusDean2014.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/WildBoarDeerCensusDean2014.pdf/$file/WildBoarDeerCensusDean2014.pdf)

<sup>[2]</sup>[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FR\\_Wild\\_Boar\\_Deer\\_FoDean\\_Gill\\_2015.pdf/\\$file/FR\\_Wild\\_Boar\\_Deer\\_FoDean\\_Gill\\_2015.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FR_Wild_Boar_Deer_FoDean_Gill_2015.pdf/$file/FR_Wild_Boar_Deer_FoDean_Gill_2015.pdf)

<sup>[3]</sup>[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FR\\_FeralWildBoarDeanCensus2016.pdf/\\$file/FR\\_FeralWildBoarDeanCensus2016.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FR_FeralWildBoarDeanCensus2016.pdf/$file/FR_FeralWildBoarDeanCensus2016.pdf)

<sup>[4]</sup> Moore, N (2004) The ecology and management of wild boar in southern England. Defra Final Project report VC0325

<sup>[5]</sup>[http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk\\_news/article1531334.ece?shareToken=9e5751612dd96b39c4c63d23a0fc8d65](http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/article1531334.ece?shareToken=9e5751612dd96b39c4c63d23a0fc8d65)

<sup>[6]</sup>[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605090108/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/feralwildboar\\_tcm6-4508.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605090108/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/feralwildboar_tcm6-4508.pdf)

<sup>[7]</sup> [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/2465/pdfs/uksi\\_20072465\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/2465/pdfs/uksi_20072465_en.pdf)

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