

Feral wild boar in England

A consultation by the Department for
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

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Feral Wild boar in England

This document invites your views on how feral wild boar in England should be managed. The Government's overall aim is to ensure an acceptable balance between wild boar and the interests of conservation, farming, horticulture, woodland management, infrastructure and human safety as well as the welfare of the boar.

To date, wild boar (both captive and feral) have fallen under a range of agencies and Local Authorities and management and legislation surrounding them has been piecemeal. This consultation aims to produce a more coherent policy relating to wild boar and to produce a strategic framework to better co-ordinate their keeping and management. The accompanying papers "*Feral Wild Boar in England: Status, impact and management*" and "*Feral Wild Boar in England: Implications of future management options*" were commissioned by Defra to provide a basis on which to stimulate debate about wild boar management and to give further background information to those that are considering responding to this public consultation exercise. Feedback from this consultation exercise will inform future strategies, both short and longer-term, in England.

Introduction

1. After an absence of several hundred years, wild boar have recently established several small populations in England. Wild boar are a widespread species worldwide with a native range stretching from Western Europe to south-east Asia. They became extinct in Britain at least 300 years ago and all the existing populations have become established following escape from captivity. Boar can freely interbreed with domestic pigs and the genetic status of the feral boar in England is unclear. Feral pigs and hybrids have faster reproduction and live at higher densities than wild boar.
2. The English feral boar population is thought to number less than 500 animals with the main population in Kent and Sussex and smaller breeding populations in west Dorset and Herefordshire. Individuals are also regularly reported from elsewhere but sustained breeding has not been proven.
3. Wild boar are capable of rapid population increases due to the early onset of puberty, their ability to have large litters and potential to breed more than once per year. They are also capable of long-distance dispersal and have no natural predators in the UK. Many people may take pleasure from seeing boar in the countryside. However, the probable future growth in numbers would incur significant problems for a range of interests. The time is now right to consider how best to manage these populations.
4. Wild boar are closely associated with woodland and other habitats providing significant cover. They are likely to have a significant impact on conservation interests, as they are a large and omnivorous keystone woodland species that may affect a wide range of plant and animal species. Whilst their impact on woodlands may be beneficial, their disturbance of grasslands, ground-nesting birds and hibernating dormice may prove problematical.

5. Boar, particularly at high densities, can cause damage to agricultural and horticultural crops, woodland, conservation sites, golf courses, sports fields and gardens, and can pose a safety hazard, for example, by causing road collisions or even attack on humans. In continental Europe, wild boar are seen as the most significant mammalian pest of agriculture with compensation for damage in France for example exceeding £10M per annum. The current cost of damage in England is small but is likely to grow if boar populations spread and increase. Boar involvement in road traffic accidents is significant in their established European range and is likely to increase in England if the population expands.
6. Of greater significance than direct crop damage is the risk wild boar pose to domestic livestock (cattle and sheep as well as pigs) as a potential wildlife reservoir for a number of diseases. Classical Swine Fever (CSF) and Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) are the two most economically significant of these.
7. Having a large wild boar population may also have implications for the keeping of domestic pigs, effectively forcing pig breeders to keep pigs indoors (because of the risk of disease or interbreeding) or spend considerable sums on providing adequate fencing.
8. In the absence of significant natural predators, boar numbers are limited only by the availability of resources (such as food and shelter) or by human intervention. Fencing and deterrents can be used to manage boar problems in some circumstances, but these are unlikely to be cost effective in the longer term, particularly if the population grows unchecked.
9. Defra has been carrying out research on wild boar since 1996. Monitoring of escapes and distribution of the three main populations has also taken place. Defra has also recently commissioned research to assess the level of risk of colonisation in different parts of the country. Output from this will help inform the consultation.
10. To date there has been no Government involvement in wild boar management in England, however, the keeping of boar is under the jurisdiction of Local Authorities. Boar culling is currently *ad hoc* and unregulated and to date has been carried out by land-owners and those acting on their behalf. There is currently no closed season to prevent culling of lactating sows.

Why are we reviewing the monitoring and management of wild boar?

11. The main driver for this review is the establishment of several small populations of wild boar in England for the first time in several hundred years. These populations, though small, are already causing a variety of problems for several sectors, notably agricultural and transport interests. In the absence of management, and with further escapes likely, the populations would be expected to grow and spread with a resultant increase in impact.

Scope of consultation

12. The consultation is intended to consider all aspects of the Government's role in wild boar monitoring, management and advice, including legislative measures. The outcome of this consultation may result in no further action being taken by central Government. It is important to consider the possible implications of all management options before making firm decisions.

13. Responsibility for the management of wildlife is devolved and therefore, this consultation applies to England only.

Who will benefit from the review?

14. An improved legislative framework and more co-ordinated monitoring and control as well as provision of informed advice and guidance should benefit a wide range of people, including those who:

- Farm agricultural and horticultural crops
- Farm livestock
- Manage woodlands or parklands
- Use or manage the transport infrastructure (e.g. roads and railways)
- Shoot boar for sport or are involved with deer, game and wildlife management
- Are concerned about impact on biodiversity and conservation interests
- Take a close interest in animal welfare
- Deliver Government policy
- Manage access to and use the countryside.

What is the Government's role in wild boar management?

15. The Government's aim is to promote the sustainable use of natural resources, to protect the public's interest in relation to biodiversity, and to ensure high standards of animal health and welfare.

16. Flowing from this, the Government's principal role in wild boar management is strategic: to ensure that there is an appropriate legal framework; to provide informed advice and guidance; and to promote best practice.

17. Given that wild boar in England have no natural predators except man, effective population management may require an adequate annual cull to limit local boar numbers to levels where they will not cause unacceptable damage or risks to people or livestock. Currently, all control has been carried out by land-owners. A more

directed management policy that involved culling would be likely to need Government involvement.

18. In England, advice and guidance on boar management (see Annex A) is provided on behalf of Government by the Rural Development Service, Defra.

" Feral Wild Boar in England: Status, impact and management "

19. Before embarking on this consultation, Defra commissioned the Rural Development Service to review the current situation and options for wild boar management in England. The findings of this review are presented in the report **"Feral Wild Boar in England: Status, impact and management"** by Charles Wilson, a senior wildlife management adviser in the Defra National Wildlife Management Team. This report is supplemented by a second paper **"Feral Wild Boar in England: Implications of future management options"** which deals with the potential future development of feral boar populations and explores the costs associated with the management options put forward below. These papers provide valuable background and are key elements of this consultation.

20. We hope that you find the reports helpful in stimulating your own views about how feral wild boar should be managed in the future.

Issues to consider

21. We would like to hear your views on the proposals summarised below. The background and rationale for each are given in the accompanying reports "Feral Wild Boar in England: Status, impact and management " and "Feral Wild Boar in England: Implications of future management options".
22. Comments on other aspects of wild boar management and wild boar-related legislation are also welcome.

Section A

Please complete and return the consultation response at Annex C with your preferred management proposals and additional comments.

Future management options

We are considering the following proposals relating to Government involvement in the management of the current English population of wild boar. Please indicate on the consultation response your preferred management option and the priority you attach to it. Please feel free to add comments or clarifications in the comments section. Please also feel free to make additional or alternative suggestions if you feel we have missed an important issue.

- (a) No direct Government management on all current and future populations. This would probably result in the eventual establishment of boar populations in most suitable areas of England.
- (b) Eradicate all existing feral populations and cull all new escapees. This would aim to remove all individual wild boar and feral pigs as well as any new escapes.
- (c) Treat feral pigs/hybrids and feral boar separately, eradicating all feral pig populations and culling all escaped feral pigs and hybrids but allowing the managed continued existence of feral wild boar populations.
- (d) Manage existing wild boar populations on a regional basis: limiting spread in existing populations and preventing establishment of wild boar in some areas, particularly those with extensive populations of domestic pigs in outdoor units. This would effectively exclude wild boar, for example, from large parts of Yorkshire and East Anglia.
- (e) No direct Government management on the existing established populations but prevent new populations becoming established. Assuming that the current levels of culling by land-owners and others continue, this lack of Government intervention would probably result in the slow expansion of the three existing populations, particularly those in Sussex and the Forest of Dean.

Section B Other proposals

Please consider the following proposals and use the tick boxes and comments boxes in Annex C to indicate your views. Please indicate whether you agree with each proposal and what level of priority you attach to it.

(i) Disease and animal welfare

Please consider the following proposals concerning disease and animal welfare relating to wild boar.

- (f) Clarification of the requirement for notification of the relevant diseases in feral pigs/ wild boar, including in the proposed Tuberculosis (England) Order.
- (g) Modification of existing orders, such as the Aujeszky's Disease Order 1983, to make a clear requirement for notification in feral boar.
- (h) Disease contingency plans should remain flexible enough to allow testing and possible emergency control measures where wild boar population density or other local circumstances suggest that wild boar may pose a risk.

(ii) Changes to legislation

Please consider the following proposals to amend legislation in England relating to wild boar.

- (i) Introducing a close season for wild boar between March 1 and August 31.
- (j) Introducing a legal minimum firearms requirement for culling feral pigs/wild boar; a suggested minimum is .270 Winchester, 130-grain bullet and 2600ft/lbs muzzle energy.
- (k) Removal of farmed wild boar and their hybrids from the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 and making an order for the control of their keeping under the Destructive Imported Animals Act 1932. This would require regular inspection of all premises containing boar or hybrids by Defra inspectors.
- (l) Introduce legal provision for the control of escaped feral animals.
- (m) Consider adding wild boar to Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to prohibit their release into the wild.

(iii) Monitoring of feral populations and establishments containing wild boar and wild boar/domestic pig hybrids

Please consider the following proposals concerning the monitoring of wild boar and the controls over those kept in captivity.

- (n) Closer monitoring of existing farms containing wild boar and wild boar/domestic pigs, including registration of all wild boar farms.
- (o) Individual marking of all wild boar and hybrids on farms to ensure subsequent traceability.
- (p) Defra should continue to record, collate and monitor existing populations and new escapes.
- (q) Longer term monitoring of the effects of wild boar rooting on woodland and grassland flora should be undertaken to supplement the preliminary data so far available.

(iv) Provision of advice and guidance

Please consider the following proposals outlining the provision of advice and guidance on wild boar.

- (r) Advisory guidelines/literature should be produced to provide guidance to Local Authorities and others on minimising risks to the public (via direct aggression and RTAs).
- (s) Advisory guidelines should be made available to the public on how to minimise the risk of potentially dangerous encounters with feral wild boar.
- (t) Advice should be made available to land managers and others on wild boar, the problems they may cause, and their management.
- (u) Advice should be made available to owners of premises with wild boar on methods of containment, reporting escapes etc.
- (v) Illustrated advisory material should be produced to aid hunters, gamekeepers, stalkers and others, in disease identification.

23. In making comments on the issues above, we would be grateful if consultees could specify, as far as possible, the costs and benefits they believe would arise from any changes proposed to current arrangements. In considering the way forward, these will be material factors for the Government to weigh up.

What happens next?

24. Following the consultation, ideas will be reviewed and the potential costs and benefits assessed. We will publish a summary of responses to the consultation and a paper outlining how we plan to take resulting proposals forward.

Conclusion

25. The Government recognises the problems posed by the newly-established wild boar populations as well as the potential benefits that may be derived from them. The two accompanying reports, which form part of this consultation, take into account the challenges posed by this high-impact species. Having considered the main report's recommendations, Defra are now seeking the views of stakeholders and the wider public on the proposals arising from the study. Responses to this consultation will inform the Government's policy and future strategies for managing wild boar in England.

26. We hope that everyone with an interest in wild boar will contribute to this consultation and, by doing so, to the development of an appropriate and balanced approach to the management of wild boar in England.

How to contribute

Deadline for Comments

27. In order to give interested parties sufficient time to consider these papers, there is an 18-week period for responses. If you wish to make comments on the issues covered by this document, please send them to the following address by **January 6 2006**.

Wild Boar Consultation
Wildlife Management Team
European Wildlife Division
Floor 1 Zone 10/D
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
BRISTOL
BS1 6EB

or by e-mail, using our dedicated consultation mail box:

EWD.WildboarConsultation@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Enquiries and complaints

28. If you have any questions about the consultation exercise, please contact Niall Moore (contact details: Tel: 01904 462062; Fax: 0117 372 8182; E-mail:

niall.moore@defra.gsi.gov.uk; address: as above).

29. If you have any comments or complaints about the conduct of this consultation exercise (as opposed to comments about the issues which are the subject of the consultation), these should be addressed to Defra's Consultation Co-ordinator Daniel Barwick at Room 7/C Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR, (e-mail: consultation-coordinator@defra.gsi.gov.uk).

Consultation process

30. In line with Defra's policy of openness, at the end of the consultation period copies of the responses we receive may be made publicly available through the Defra Information Resource Centre, Lower Ground Floor, Ergon House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR. The information they contain may also be published in a summary of responses.

31. If you do not consent to this, you must clearly request that your response be treated confidentially. Any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system in e-mail responses will not be treated as such a request.

32. The Information Resource Centre will supply copies of consultation responses to personal callers or in response to telephone or e-mail requests (tel: 020 7238 6575, e-mail: defra.library@defra.gsi.gov.uk). Wherever possible, personal callers should give the library at least 24 hours' notice of their requirements. An administrative charge will be made to cover photocopying and postage costs.

Other information

33. If you are aware of any organisations or individuals that might be interested in seeing and commenting on the enclosed paper but who have not received it, please let us know and a copy will be sent to them.

Advice on managing boar and related issues

Rural Development Service - National Wildlife Management Team

Contact details: Wildlife Administration Unit, Defra, Burghill Road, Westbury-on-Trym, BRISTOL, BS10 6NJ. Tel: 0845 6014523 (local rate); Fax: 0845 6013438 (local rate)

Website: www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/vertebrates

List of Consultees

Acheta Partnership
Advocates For Animals
All Party Group For Animal Welfare
Animal Defenders (Campaigns) Ltd
Animal Procedures Committee
Animal Welfare Science, Ethics & Law
Veterinary Association
Animals In Mind
Association of Chief Police Officers
Association of Local Government
Ecologists
Association of National Park Authorities
Association of Veterinarians in Industry
Born Free Foundation
Bristol University
British Association for Shooting and
Conservation
British Association of Nature
Conservationists
British Deer Society
British Pest Control Association
British Pig Association
British Trust for Ornithology
British Water
British Waterways
British Wild Boar Association
British Wildlife Management
British Wildlife Rehabilitation Council
Catholic Study Circle for Animal Welfare
Central Science Laboratory
Centre for Ecology & Hydrology
Chartered Institute of Environmental
Health
Civil Aviation Authority
Compassion In World Farming (CIWF)
Community Forest Ramblers Association
Council for National Parks
Council for the Protection of Rural
England
Country Land and Business Association
Countryside Agency
Countryside Alliance
Countryside Council for Wales
Crown Estate
Department of Culture, Media and Sport
Department of Agriculture and Rural
Development for Northern Ireland
Department of Environment Northern
Ireland
Department of Health
Department of Trade and Industry
Ecodart
English Heritage
English Nature
Environment Agency
Farm Animal Welfare Council
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
Federation of Deer Management Societies
Food Standards Agency
Forest Enterprise
Forestry & Timber Association
Forestry Commission
Game Conservancy Trust
Game Farmers Association
General Association of National Park
Authorities
Health & Safety Executive
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
Home Office
Highways Agency
Humane Urban Wildlife Deterrence
Industry Nature Conservation Association
Institute of Chartered Foresters
Institute of Environmental Sciences
Institute of Zoology
International Fund for Animal Welfare
Joint Nature Conservancy Council
Law Commission
League Against Cruel Sports Ltd.
Local Government Association
Local Authorities Coordinators of
Regulatory Services
Lord Chancellor's Department
Magistrates Association
Mammal Society
Meat & Livestock Commission
Ministry of Defence
Moorland Gamekeepers Association

Annex B

National Animal Sanctuary Alliance
National Assembly for Wales Agric. Div.
National Association of Local Councils
National Farmers Union
National Forest
National Game Dealers Association
National Gamekeepers Organisation
National Housing and Town Planning Council
National Pest Technicians Association
National Pig Association
National Trust
National Urban Forestry Unit
Network Rail
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Open Spaces Society
Partnership Against Wildlife Crime
Peoples Trust for Endangered Species
Pig Breeders Association
Police Federation Of England And Wales Joint Central Committee
Proforest
Ramblers Association
Royal Forestry Society
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
Rural Development Service
Respect For Animals
Royal Agricultural Society Of England
Royal College Of Veterinary Surgeons
Royal Holloway College - University of London
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency
Scottish Executive
Scottish Natural Heritage
SEERAD
Small Woods Association
Sustainable Users Network
The Deer Initiative Ltd.
Timber Growers Association
Tracking Mammals Partnership
Tree Council
Union Of Country Sports Workers
Universities Federation for Animal Welfare
University Of Aberdeen
Veterinary Endemic Diseases and Zoonoses Div. Defra
Veterinary Exotic Diseases Section
Veterinary Surveillance Div. Defra
Veterinary Laboratories Agency
Vincent Wildlife Trust
Water UK
WILDCRU, Oxford University
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
Wildlife & Countryside Link
Wildlife Concern
Wildlife Information Network
Wildlife Trusts
Woodland Trust
York University
Zoological Society of London

Annex C – Consultation Response

FERAL WILD BOAR IN ENGLAND - 1

Name	<input type="text"/>	Organisation	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>		
Tel:	<input type="text"/>	Email:	<input type="text"/>

Please refer to the consultation document for a full description of all options before completing this consultation response.

Where asked to indicate the priority of any particular option please record: H for High priority, M for Medium priority and L for Low priority

SECTION A – FUTURE MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Please record only one preferred management option, but indicate, with a tick, other options that you would consider and those that you would not consider

- (a) No direct Government management
- (b) Eradication of all feral wild boar and feral pigs
- (c) Eradication of feral pigs only
- (d) Regional management of wild boar/ feral pigs
- (e) Prevention of future feral wild boar population establishment

Preferred management option (Record priority as H, M or L)	Not an option	Would consider
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments

<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>

SECTION B – OTHER PROPOSALS

(i) DISEASE AND ANIMAL WELFARE

Please consider the following proposals concerning disease and animal welfare and use the tick boxes and comments box below to indicate your views. Please indicate whether you agree with each proposal and what level of priority you attach to it. Please tick or record H for High priority, M for Medium priority and L for Low priority.

	Agree (Record priority as H, M or L)	Disagree	Don't Know
(f) Clarification of the requirement for notification of the relevant diseases in feral pigs/wild boar, including the proposed Tuberculosis (England) Order.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) Modification of existing orders, such as Aujeszky's Disease Order 1983, to make a clear requirement for notification in feral boar.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) Disease contingency plans should remain flexible enough to allow testing and possible emergency control measures where wild boar population density or other local circumstances suggest they may pose a risk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments

<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>

Annex C – Consultation Response

FERAL WILD BOAR IN ENGLAND - 2

(ii) CHANGES TO LEGISLATION

Please consider the following proposals to amend legislation in England relating to wild boar. *Please tick or record H for High priority, M for Medium priority and L for Low priority.*

	Agree (Record priority as H, M or L)	Disagree	Don't Know
(i) Introducing a close season for feral wild boar between March 1 st and August 31 st	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(j) Introducing a legal minimum firearms requirement for culling feral pigs/wild boar; a suggested minimum is .270 Winchester, 130-grain bullet and 2600 ft/lbs muzzle energy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(k) Removal of farmed wild boar and their hybrids from the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 and making an order for the control of their keeping under the Destructive Imported Animals Act 1932. This would require regular inspection of all premises containing boar or hybrids by Defra inspectors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(l) Introduce legal provision for the control of escaped feral animals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(m) Consider adding wild boar to Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 to prohibit their release into the wild.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments

(iii) MONITORING OF FERAL POPULATIONS AND ESTABLISHMENTS CONTAINING WILD BOAR AND WILD BOAR/DOMESTIC PIG HYBRIDS

Please consider the following proposals concerning the monitoring of wild boar and the control of keeping in captivity. *Please tick or record H for High priority, M for Medium priority and L for Low priority.*

	Agree (Record priority as H, M or L)	Disagree	Don't Know
(n) Closer monitoring of existing farms containing wild boar and wild boar/domestic pigs, including the registration of all boar farms.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(o) Individual marking of all wild boar and hybrids on farms to ensure subsequent traceability.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(p) Defra should continue to record, collate and monitor existing populations and new escapes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(q) Longer term monitoring of the effects of feral wild boar rooting on woodland and grassland flora should be undertaken to supplement the preliminary data so far available.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments

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