

WILD BOAR MANAGEMENT

ENGLAND & WALES
BEST PRACTICE GUIDES



wild boar/domestic pig hybrid

Introduction

Wild boar have, as yet, a limited distribution in the UK and a variety of tactics may be required to adapt to them. This guide describes the reasons why management may become necessary and describes some of the techniques. It is part of a series of guides relating to wild boar¹.

Why manage boar?

Primary responsibility for feral wild boar management lies with local communities and individual landowners. See 'Feral Wild Boar in England: An action plan' below.

At appropriate densities wild boar can be beneficial to certain habitats, in particular, their rooting behaviour in woodlands disturbs soil giving opportunities for the establishment or spread of some plant species as well as providing insect microclimates. Unfortunately excessive rooting behaviour may cause undesirable changes and can be extremely damaging, especially for some valued species or sensitive habitats. Grasslands, both recreational or pastureland, as well as a number of farm and horticultural crops, are also very vulnerable.

Wild boar can also damage fences, are a potential risk to road traffic, and can be robust in their own defence, especially when harassed by dogs.

Each landowner may have different objectives in managing the presence of wild boar, e.g. encouraging their spread, maintaining populations in balance with other objectives for the land, or eradicating them. Because boar do not respect man-made boundaries, collaborating with neighbours is likely to be the best way to achieve a common aim.

Reasons why human intervention may be required in wild boar areas are:

- ◆ Dealing with boar injured as a result of road traffic accidents or other mishaps
- ◆ Reducing possible conflicts with human visitors
- ◆ Protecting conservation areas, vulnerable habitat/species
- ◆ Protecting the interests of neighbours
- ◆ Protecting managed amenity grassland areas e.g. picnic sites
- ◆ Protecting crops, fences and other infrastructure
- ◆ Controlling numbers to meet specific management objectives including collaborative regulation of population size

- ◆ Maintaining wild boar populations as a former native species and in recognition of potential positive impacts to habitats
- ◆ Providing recreational opportunities based on aesthetic appeal or controlled recreational shooting
- ◆ Maintaining the health and welfare of the population
- ◆ Utilising the meat for human consumption as a by-product of management
- ◆ Responding to notifiable disease outbreaks, as advised by DEFRA
- ◆ Preventing hybridisation with domestic pigs

Whatever the overall objectives, if wild boar become established in an area, it is likely that they will need to be managed to prevent their numbers from increasing to levels where impacts become unacceptable.

Management options

Monitoring

It is strongly recommended that the presence of wild boar and the way they may affect their habitats is monitored. Because wild boar may spread into new areas or increase in numbers very rapidly, it is important to be able spot changes quickly, so that if management is required, it can begin as soon as possible.

Surveys using night viewing techniques, daytime sightings, other visible evidence and impact assessments, plus information derived from culled boar, can all be collated. With the benefit of expert opinion, a picture of the status of boar in an area can be built up and used to measure progress towards management objectives.

Informed non-intervention

If there are no present or predicted impacts, and neighbours' interests have been taken into account, then a landowner may decide not to intervene in the spread or increase of boar populations. It should be borne in mind that where boar become established non-intervention is unlikely to be appropriate in the longer term. Monitoring should continue regardless of management policies.

Deterrents

Chemical deterrents for use in this country must be approved under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. There are none currently approved or that have been tested specifically as wild boar repellents but it may be possible to use some of those approved as general animal repellents in some situations. Chemical deterrents are often expensive and may require repeated application. There are no known legal chemical deterrents that are effective over time. Scaring is rapidly adapted to but if persistent can at least help to prevent boar becoming too tame. Using dogs to deter boar is definitely not recommended and could be illegal in some circumstances under the Hunting Act 2004². Dogs should be kept on a lead where boar are likely to be present.

Exclusion

Specialist fencing may prevent boar from entering vulnerable sites such as pastures or campsites, or from damaging fences designed to exclude species such as deer and rabbits.

Fences adequate to exclude boar are expensive, may add considerably to site management costs, and might increase boar pressure on neighbouring unfenced areas. See the Wild Boar Fencing guide.

Feeding

Diversionary feeding should not be regarded as a solution to localised boar damage, in the long term it could potentially support an increase in numbers and range, thus causing wider damage.

Baiting boar onto control sites must be carefully controlled (see Shooting Wild Boar guide).

No feeding should take place near areas sensitive to boar damage, in public areas, or near highways.

Controlling numbers

Experience from other countries indicates that wild boar numbers are likely to have to be controlled to prevent their impacts reaching unacceptable levels. The aim of such control should be to bring boar numbers into balance with other land management objectives. On particularly sensitive sites or in response to disease control orders this could mean local eradication.

- ◆ **Shooting.** The most widely applied method of reducing numbers is shooting. If it is done according to good practice, shooting is a humane and selective method of controlling numbers, having a by-product of a high quality, low fat meat, for human consumption. (see Shooting Wild Boar guide).
- ◆ **Trapping.** It is possible to trap wild boar alive, but the techniques are more suitable for research or for dealing with individual problem animals rather than controlling populations. Anyone releasing trapped wild boar without an appropriate licence may be committing an offence (see Legislation guide). Because wild boar at close quarters are potentially dangerous and difficult to deal with, live-trapping is only likely to be appropriate where experienced and trained personnel are involved.
- ◆ **Contraception.** The possibility of controlling wild boar populations by use of contraception is the subject of on-going research. As yet this is not a method that can be practically applied in the field.

Legislation and Risk Assessment

There is no specific legislation regarding the management of non-captive wild boar although general protection against cruelty is afforded by the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996. See also the Wild Boar Legislation guide.

The Police have specific requirements for licensing firearms for shooting boar (see the Shooting Wild Boar guide).

It is recommended that anyone planning, or likely to come into contact with wild boar through their work undertakes a risk assessment as wild boar can, in some situations, be unpredictable.

Further Information

¹ See the wild boar guides at www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk

² Hunting Act 2004 http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/en/ukpgaen_20040037_en_1

To see “Feral Wild Boar in England: An action plan” go to <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/species/wildboar.aspx>