

Feral wild boar in England

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

Summary of responses

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Contents

1.0	Introduction	5
2.0	Executive summary	6
3.0	Collation of responses	7
4.0	Summary of responses to individual suggestions ('a' to 'v')	8
5.0	Other issues respondents took the opportunity to raise	12
6.0	Selected comments from some of those who responded	13
7.0	Conclusion	13

1.0 Introduction

- 1.01 This document is a summary of the responses received to the public consultation *Feral wild boar in England* held between 2 September 2005 and 6 January 2006 (EWD.WildboarConsultation@defra.gsi.gov.uk). It summarises and highlights the range of responses received. The authoritative source is the respondents' formal replies which are available through Defra's Information Resource Centre, Lower Ground Floor, Ergon House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR.
- 1.02 The purpose of the consultation was to inform the development of future Government policy on wild boar by inviting views on:
- Future management options
 - Disease and animal welfare
 - Changes to legislation
 - Monitoring feral and captive populations
 - Provision of advice and guidance
- 1.03 Under these headings, 22 proposals were put forward for consideration (see Annex A).
- 1.04 The consultation attracted a significant number of replies (248) from individuals and organisations representing a wide variety of interests. A list of those who responded to the consultation is included at Annex B. Where abbreviations of organisations' names are used these can be found in the glossary at Annex C.

2.0 Executive Summary

- 2.01 The main driver for this review is the recent establishment of several populations of wild boar in England and the potential these have for increasing and spreading across the country. Boar can cause problems to a number of sectors, notably their threat of disease transmission to domestic livestock. They can also impact directly by causing damage to crops as well as impacting on conservation habitats and causing traffic accidents. The consultation considered a range of aspects of the Government's current or potential role in boar management and advice, including legislative measures.
- 2.02 Setting aside the five potential management options, all of the proposals were supported by a majority of those who responded to them, although the level of support varied from 57% to 94%. Some proposals, particularly those related to disease, were rated as being of higher priority than others (particularly those related to the provision of advice).
- 2.03 **(a) Future management options**
Of the five potential management options put forward the dominant view was that there should be some form of active management of the feral boar populations. Only 20% wanted no management, while 44% wanted eradication and 36% wanted an intermediate management option short of eradication. In other words, almost 80% of respondents wanted some form of active management.
- 2.04 **(b) Disease and animal welfare**
All three proposals (two for clarification of existing disease orders, the third for maintaining flexible contingency plans) were supported by over 75% of those who responded to the question.
- 2.05 **(c) Legislative Changes**
Five proposed legislative changes were raised in the consultation and all were supported by a majority of those who responded to the question. The most strongly supported proposal (81%) was the introduction of a legal minimum calibre of firearm and ammunition for shooting while the least strongly supported proposal (57%) was the removal of wild boar from the Dangerous Wild Animals Act and placing them under the provisions of the Destructive Imported Animals Act.
- 2.06 **(d) Monitoring feral populations and establishments containing wild boar and wild boar/domestic pig hybrids**
All four of the proposals were supported by the majority of respondents. In particular, there was very strong support (88%) for continued Defra monitoring of the feral populations as well as closer monitoring of wild boar farms (81%).
- 2.07 **(e) Provision of advice and guidance**
All five of the proposals to provide advice and guidance were very strongly supported (over 90% in four of the five cases) although in general the provision of advice was seen as less of a priority than most of the other proposals in the consultation.

3.0 Collation of responses

- 3.01 Most respondents (over 75%) used the questionnaire format within the main consultation document and many respondents also added qualifying comments to individual proposals. In a summary of responses it is not possible to go into every suggestion. The data presented below indicate the overall level of support for a proposal in principle, but it should be remembered that not all replies counted as agreements, or disagreements, were absolute or without qualification.
- 3.02 Not all respondents gave clear indications of support or opposition to all 22 proposals. The responses are therefore given in terms of percentages of those who expressed a clear opinion one way or the other.
- 3.03 In the data presented below, each response was given equal weighting, although some responses were from individuals and some from groups or organisations representing more than one person. Individuals who belonged to a group who had responded on behalf of their members may also have responded in their own right as an individual.
- 3.04 During the development of Government policy on wild boar, further consideration will be given to the views of the responses from organisations which represent the views of their members.
- 3.05 Some comments have been included to give a feel for the general flavour or range of comments received. Many of these have been para-phrased to encompass more than one response and so not all comments have been attributed to any particular respondent. Due to the large number of responses and comments it is not possible to present all comments in this summary.

4.0 Summary of responses to individual suggestions ('a' to 'v')

4.01 Management options

- 4.02 There was a substantial divergence of opinion on what management (if any) should be carried out on the existing feral boar populations (Figure 1). The individual category which received strongest support was for eradication, with 43.9% of responses, followed by regional management (25.5%), no management (20.3%), culling of feral pigs only (9.1%) and preventing the establishment of new populations only (1.3%).
- 4.03 Although eradication of feral populations was statistically the preferred option, the majority of respondents (56.1%) did not want the feral populations eradicated. However, almost 80% of respondents recognised the need for some management of the feral boar populations. Of these, respondents who favoured eradication were almost balanced by those who wanted to maintain feral populations in some form but who wanted some management.
- 4.04 Of those that preferred eradication, the majority (84.5%) of those who gave a reason (n = 58) cited animal health issues (mainly for domestic pigs), while 31% cited human safety. Small numbers also mentioned crop damage (n = 3) or interbreeding with domestic pigs (n = 3).

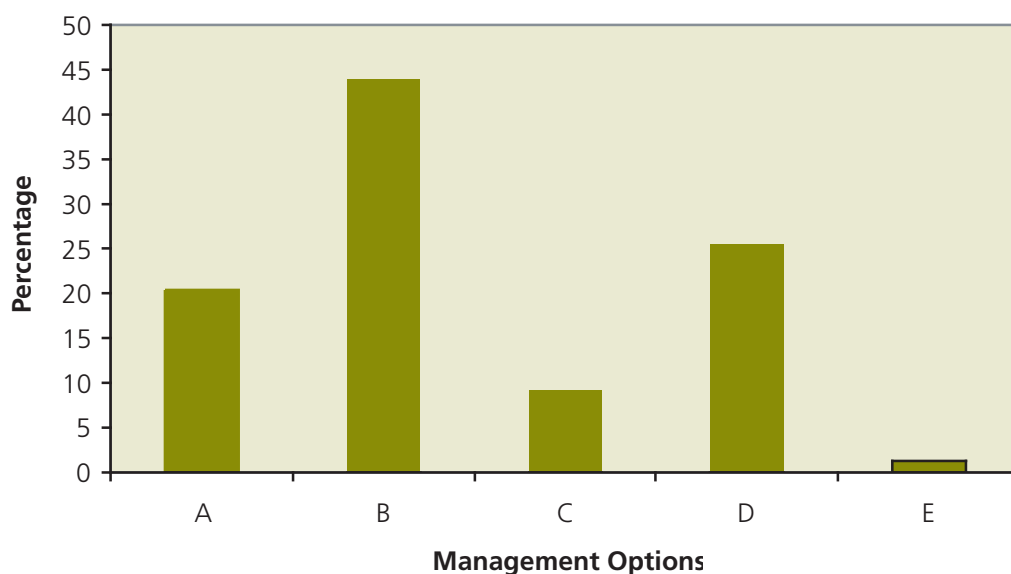


Figure 1. The percentage of respondents who were in favour of the five different management options for feral wild boar. Option A = no management, option B = eradication, option C = feral pig culling alone, option D = regional management and option E = prevention of new populations becoming established only.

Comments:

Many respondents suggested that eradication was no longer feasible as boar were too secretive and widespread. BASC, among others, suggested that, if eradication were to be attempted, access to land would be crucial but may be problematical. Several respondents suggested that any Government policy should not be confined to England as feral boar had the potential to become established in Scotland and Wales as well.

4.0 Summary of responses to individual suggestions ('a' to 'v')

4.05 Disease and animal welfare

Overall, there was strong support (over 75%) for all three proposals and all were given high priority by over 70% of those who supported them.

(f) Clarification of the requirement for notification of the relevant diseases in feral pigs/wild boar, including the proposed Tuberculosis (England) Order.

This was supported by 81.3% of respondents and, of these, was considered a high priority by 75.4%.

(g) Modification of existing orders, such as Aujeszky's Disease Order 1983, to make a clear requirement for notification in feral boar.

This was supported by 75.6% of respondents (76% put it as a high priority).

(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

This was supported by 84.1% of respondents (71% put it as a high priority).

Comments:

Several respondents suggested that there is little chance of monitoring or controlling disease in feral populations.

4.06 Changes to Legislation

All five proposals for legislative change were supported by the majority of those who responded to the questions. However, there was substantial variation in the level of support (57% - 81%) and the priority attached to them (60% - 72%).

(i) Introducing a close season for feral wild boar between March 1st and August 31st.

This was supported by 60.2% of respondents with 70% of these listing it as high priority.

(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.

This was supported by 80.5% of those who replied (with 72.1% of these listing it as a high priority).

(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.

This was supported by 57.1% of those who replied (with 60.2% of these listing it as a high priority).

4.0 Summary of responses to individual suggestions ('a' to 'v')

(l) Introduce legal provision for the control of escaped feral animals.

This was supported by 69.9% of those who replied (69% of these listed it as a high priority).

(m) Consider adding wild boar to Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 to prohibit their release into the wild.

This was supported by 69.3% of those who replied (65.2% of these listed it as a high priority).

Comments:

BASC and the RSPCA, amongst others, agreed that there is a need for a closed season to ensure the maintenance of high standards of animal welfare. Several respondents suggested that this closed season should be longer than that suggested (at both ends) while one suggested that, as boar potentially breed throughout the year, having a closed season is superfluous. Others suggested that a closed season was not necessary for male boar while the Deer Initiative suggested that any closed season would need to allow for out-of-season culling for crop protection, public safety etc. The Police Service in England and Wales suggested that there was no need to amend the law on minimum calibre requirements as individual police constabularies are effectively doing this in any case as part of Firearms Certification of individuals. There were also several respondents who suggested the use of heavier bullets (150 grain), particularly with respect to larger animals. The potential use of solid slugs ('Brennekes') was also suggested. Many of those who opposed the use of a closed season did so as they favoured eradication and felt this would inhibit its success.

4.07 **Monitoring of feral populations and establishments containing wild boar and wild boar/domestic pig hybrids**

Overall, all four proposals received strong support (75% - 88%) and all were rated as high priority by these respondents, however, this varied from 54% for proposal 'o' to 68% for proposal 'p'.

(n) Closer monitoring of existing farms containing wild boar and wild boar/domestic pigs, including the registration of all boar farms.

This proposal was supported by 80.8% of those who answered the question and was given a high priority by 64.4% of those who supported it.

(o) Individual marking of all wild boar and hybrids on farms to ensure subsequent traceability.

This proposal was supported by 75% of those who answered the question and was given a high priority by 54.4% of those who supported it.

4.0 Summary of responses to individual suggestions ('a' to 'v')

(p) Defra should continue to record, collate and monitor existing populations and new escapes.

This proposal was supported by 88.2% of those who answered the question and was given a high priority by 67.8% of those who supported it.

(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.

This proposal was supported by 79.1% of those who answered the question and was given a high priority by 66.7% of those who supported it.

Comments:

The BWBA suggested that individual marking of wild boar on farms would be extremely difficult in practice and, even if it were possible, it would be a disincentive to people to farm boar. T. Drew suggested that as well as the monitoring suggested above there should also be monitoring of diseases or antibodies to them in the feral boar populations. This suggestion was also put forward by the British Pig Executive. Both English Nature and the Zoological Society of London suggested that monitoring of the impact on native species other than flora (e.g. dormice) should also be carried out. The RSPB also made a similar point, suggesting that monitoring should be conducted on lowland heath and the impact on ground-nesting birds in woodland, grassland and heathland habitats should be monitored.

4.08 Provision of advice and guidance

All five proposals were strongly supported by respondents. Indeed, this general category received the most overwhelming support (ranging from 88% to 94%). However, it was also seen as of generally lower priority (43% - 64%) than most of the other proposals.

(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).

Support for this was high at 90.2% but its priority rating was low with only 45.9% classing it as a high priority.

(s) Advisory guidelines should be made available to the public on how to minimise the risk of potentially dangerous encounters with feral wild boar.

Support for this was high at 88.3% but its priority rating was low (the lowest for all the proposals) with only 43.1% classing it as a high priority.

(t) Advice should be made available to land managers and others on feral wild boar, the problems they may cause, and their management.

Support for this was extremely high at 93.2% but its priority rating was relatively low with 53.3% classing it as a high priority.

4.0 Summary of responses to individual suggestions ('a' to 'v')

(u) Advice should be made available to owners of premises with wild boar, on methods of containment, reporting escapes etc.

Support for this was the highest of any of the 22 proposals at 94% and its priority rating was 63.5% classing it as a high priority.

(v) Illustrated advisory material should be produced to aid hunters, gamekeepers, stalkers and others, in disease identification.

Support for this was very high at 91.4% and 59.7% classed it as a high priority.

Comments:

Many respondents, while agreeing that the provision of advice was needed, stressed that it should be balanced and should not serve to exaggerate the risks to safety in the minds of the public. Any advisory material should point out both that wild boar are a former native species and mention the benefits of wild boar and not just potential problems.

5.0 Other issues respondents took the opportunity to raise:

Please note that this section is a summary of respondents' replies and their inclusion does not infer that their views necessarily concur with those of Defra.

- 5.01 *Containment of boar during transportation, handling and temporary enclosure.* This has been raised as being important as a number of escapes have occurred during transportation or immediately prior to slaughter rather than just on the wild boar farms.
- 5.02 *Lack of woodland in England means more potential interaction with boar.* It was suggested that because of the lower amount of woodland cover in England (compared with much of continental Europe) the possibility of negative interaction between the public and feral boar would be higher in England.
- 5.03 *Wild boar as a former native species are part of our natural heritage.* Many respondents suggested that wild boar are a former native species and are returning after an absence of several hundred years. As such they have a right to exist in the countryside.
- 5.04 *The threat to native breeds of pig.* The British Pig Association point out that Britain contains more native breeds of pig than any other developed country. A serious disease outbreak could jeopardise their continued existence and it is simply not possible to go out and buy some more.
- 5.05 *Carcass movements and disposal.* Several respondents suggested that there needed to be tighter controls on carcass movement as well as guidance on carcass disposal (e.g. following an RTA).
- 5.06 *The UK contains large numbers of outdoor pigs.* Several respondents pointed out that the UK is unique in having a significant proportion of its domestic pigs in outdoor units which are inherently less biosecure than indoor pigs.
- 5.07 *Emerging pig diseases.* As well as existing diseases there are new pig diseases continually emerging which would also need to be considered.

4.0 Summary of responses to individual suggestions ('a' to 'v')

6.0 Selected Comments from some of those who responded

- 6.01 'Wild boar can exist alongside humans and do so in much of Continental Europe'. *The Herpetological Conservation Trust*.
- 6.02 'Control of wild boar population growth will be essential to avoid significant damage to agricultural, silvicultural' ecological, game rearing and associated human land use interests'. *D. Gow*.
- 6.03 'Having been monitoring the wild boar in Kent-East Sussex since 1989 it is clear to me that numbers are constant and are not spiralling out of control'. *D. Harman*.
- 6.04 'Our countryside has survived very well without wild boar for the last few hundred years, we don't need them now'. *J. Rankin*.
- 6.05 'They are an iconic species, a significant part of our cultural history and it is entirely appropriate that they should be allowed to flourish in appropriate areas'. *R.N. Cartwright*.
- 6.06 'Eastern England has the world's largest concentration of free-range breeding pigs. Wild and feral pigs pose a real and serious threat to herd health'. *C.T. Fogden*.
- 6.07 'We devote considerable resources and argument to persuading other countries, notably in Africa, Asia and South America, to look after their wild animal populations and allow them space to live in despite the damage they can do. We should apply the same principles to ourselves'. *Lord Lucas of Crudwell and Dingwall*.
- 6.08 'The disease risk is too great to allow wild boar or feral pigs to roam free in the countryside'. *D.C. Overton*.
- 6.09 'There is a clear conservation case for returning the species to part of its former natural range as a contribution to the restoration of lost biodiversity'. *English Nature*.
- 6.10 'Any action taken with regard to controlling feral wild boar/pigs must be proportionate to the risks'. *RSPCA*.
- 6.11 'From a woodland conservation perspective we believe there is a strong case to be accepting of these animals in our countryside'. *Woodland Trust*.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.01 A significant number of very helpful responses were received covering a wide range of views. The responses to this consultation are being used to help inform any future policy which will be published in a separate document.

Appendix A

Appendix A – consultation document (see separate document).

Appendix B – list of respondents in alphabetical order

Adams, N	Brooke, M A
Allen, C	Bryant, J
Allen, G	Burling, J
Allen, M	Butler, J
Alston, A	Butt, K
Auchincloss, J	Cartwright, R
Bacon, J	Catholic Concern for Animals
Baldi, R	Clachan, J
Barker	Clark, M
BASC	Clarke, N
Bauer, M	Clow, A
Bean, W	Colchester, S
Benton, J	Cook, T
Bevan, B	Cooper, B
Blake, A	Countryside Alliance
Blake, D	Countryside Council for Wales
Blyth, S	Cowley, R
Bond, I	Cranborne Chase & West Wilts. Downs AONB
Booth, W D	Crichton, P
Bowler, A	Crighton
Bown, P	Cross, M
Boynton, L	Dadswell, I
Bradley, J	Davie, G
Brayford, T	Davies, C
Brewerton, A	Dean, B
Bridges, A	Dean, N
British Deer Society	Debenham, P
British Ecological Society	Dennis, I
British Pig Association	Devonport, V
British Pig Executive	Doyle, J
British Wild Boar Association	Drew, T
Brook, P	Dunning, P

Appendix B – list of respondents in alphabetical order

Earnshaw, E	Harman, M
Edgar, Major	Harris, J
Edgson Wright P.	Harris, J
Elford, C	Harrison-Topham, R
Ellis, P	Harrold, E F
English Nature*	Hart, C E
Farm Animal Welfare Council	Harwood, T
Farnham, T	Hayden, J
Farrow, T	Hayes, P
Feltwell, J	Hayward, L
Ferguson, A	Hendry, C.J
Fisher, M	Herpetological Conservation Trust
Flatt	Highways Agency
Fletcher, A	Hillier, S
Fogden, C	Holt, M
French, M	Horrell, I
Fruin, D	Jackson, D
Furniss, S	Jaggard, P W
Game Conservancy Trust	JNCC
Gladwin, P W	Johnson, M
Goodhand, L	Kaye, H
Gooding, R	Keith, J
Gow, D	Kent, J D
Gray, J	Kent, W
Green, A	Kerby, R
Green, J	Kev & Lou
Guise, S	Knock, C
Hadington, P	Lambert, E
Hancock, S	Lane, N
Hancocks, P	Lawson, R
Hanson, R	League Against Cruel Sports
Harman, D	Ledeboer, M

Appendix B – list of respondents in alphabetical order

Light, C	Osborne, P
Lilwall, P	Overton, D
Loades, C	Pack, D
Long, R	Palmer, W J
Longthorp, R	Parsons, R
Lucas, R	Partridge, C
Lutwycme, R	Partridge, M
MacMillan, A	Paul, A
Maddocks, C	Pendrey, P
Mammals Trust UK	Peritogianni, V
Manchester, P	Perkins, A J K
Manning, A	Peters, S
Marriage, E	Police Service in England and Wales
Martin, J	Potter, L
McGowan, J E	Powell, L
Mencarini, J	Powse, C
Millard	Prangley, J
Miller, T	Price, R
Mills, S	Quibell, G M
Mitchell, M	Randall, C
Morrison, J	Rankin, J
Mortimer, P	Rare Breeds Survival Trust
Munro, D	Reading, S
Mutimer, J	Rendle, J
Nall, G	Revell, H
National Forest	Richard
Noble, B	Richardson, P
Noble, M	Roberts, P
Norris, W	Robins, P
Oliver-Bellasis, H	RSPB
Openshaw, R	RSPCA
Osborne, N	Rutherford, A

Appendix B – list of respondents in alphabetical order

Ryder Large	Urland, J
Sessford, T	Wales and Border Counties Pig Breeders Association
Simmons, P	Walker, J
Simons, H	Walsh, R
Sims, T	Warn, M
Small Woods Association	Watchorn, S
Smith, P	Waterer, H
Smith, R	Webster, G
Sonn, A	Wells, D H
Spiller, P	Wells, R
Spinks, A	Wheatcroft, G
Spurgeon, B	White S
St. Hubert Club	White, N
Staight, J	Whiteman
Stephenson, M J	Wildlife Trusts
Sullivan, A	Wildwood Network
Sutcliffe, M	Williams, D
Tallowin, J	Wilson, P
Tattorn, S	Wisnberg, M
Taylor, D	Woodcock, L
Teiser, E	Woodland Trust
Teiser, M	Wright, R
Teiser, W	Wrinch, R
The Deer Initiative Ltd.	Yalden, D W
Thomas, S	Zabavnik, B
Tobin, S	Zarkos-Smith, A
Tuck, R	Zoological Society of London
Turnbull, P J	
Union of Country Sports Workers	

*The English Nature response represents the confederated response from the future constituent parts of Natural England: English Nature, the Rural Development Service and the Countryside Agency.

Appendix C – glossary

BASC	British Association of Shooting and Conservation
BWBA	British Wild Boar Association
Defra	Department for environment, food and rural affairs
EN	English Nature
GCT	Game Conservancy Trust
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Protection of Animals

Published by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
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Printed on material that contains a minimum of 100% recycled fibre for
uncoated paper and 75% recycled fibre for coated paper.www.defra.gov.uk

PB11934