FERAL SWINE WORKING GROUP

Chair: Jim LaCour (Louisiana)
Vice-Chair: Vacant

Tuesday, March 26th,2024
8:00 – 10:00 AM (EDT)

89th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference

Meeting Minutes

- Call to Order/Review Agenda (J. LaCour)
  - The meeting was called to order by AFWA staffer, Bryant White
  - ~25 members and guests were in attendance
  - It was announced that Dr. Jim LaCour has taken over as Chair of the working group
  - The working group Vice-Chair position is currently vacant

- Introductions (J. LaCour)
  - Guests and members represented 6 federal agencies, 4 NGOs, 7 state agencies and 1 university

- National Feral Swine Damage Management Program update (Michael Marlow, APHIS)
  - The WS National Feral Swine Program (NFSP) conducts operations in 34 states and three territories to control existing and emerging populations of invasive feral swine. We have eliminated feral swine in twelve states since the beginning of the NFSP (declared eliminated in CO, ID, MD, MN, ME, NJ, and NY, while detecting for elimination in IA, IN, VT, WA, and WI).
  - CO and MN transferred to elimination status in 2023.
  - IN moved to detection status in 2024.
  - In states where feral swine elimination has occurred, NFSP continues to provide support, as needed to maintain outreach, and eliminate new incursions.
  - NFSP also conducts targeted surveillance for diseases of highest concern.
  - The risk-based surveillance system prioritizes collection of disease samples in areas at highest risk of foreign animal disease entry and areas with high numbers of domestic pigs.
  - Our National surveillance includes serosurveillance for classical swine fever, brucellosis, and pseudorabies.
  - Targeted surveillance also occurs for African Swine Fever in the U.S. Protection Zone (USVI and PR) and in 12 states (AL, AZ, CA, FL, GA, LA, MS, NM, OK, SC, TN, and TX). This includes surveillance for both active infection (PCR) and historical exposure (serology (ELISA)).

- Surveillance also includes sampling for Chronic Wasting Disease (12,000 samples) and it has been determined that feral swine are a vector in the shedding of prions through feces, etc. (page 7 for more details)
- Sodium Nitrite toxicant testing is currently not moving forward
- The Farm Bill which had provided significant funding to this program is in a one year extension, but renewal is unsure at this time
- The NFSP steering committee will meet next week
- The NFSP maintains a genetic archive of feral swine with ~33,000 samples which can help determine the origin of new populations through translocations

- Report from the SEAFWA & MAFWA Feral Swine Groups (Terri Brunjes (KY), Alan Leary (MO))
  - See report from the SEAFWA Wild Hog Working Group later in this report (page 4)
  - See report from the MAFWA Ad-hoc Feral Swine Committee later in this report (Page 5-6)

- Report from the National Wild Pig Task Force (John Tomecek)
  - The NWPT met during the Vertebrate Pest Conference in early March
  - The Policy Subcommittee may develop position statements on two topics:
    - Support states in efforts to eradicate and/or reduce feral swine numbers
    - Support prohibitions by states on wild pig sport hunting
  - The feral swine toxicant Kaput (warfarin based) will be available for use in Texas this Spring by licensed applicators. See more here: https://texasfarmbureau.org/toxicant-available-to-help-farmers-ranchers-control-feral-hogs/#:~:text=I%20welcome%20any%20product%20available,becomes%20available%20later%20this%20spring.

- Louisiana State University sodium nitrite bait program (J. LaCour)

  - In August 2023, LSU received a patent on the process of alkaline stabilization of sodium nitrite in their toxic feral hog bait. In March 2024, LSU received a patent on their bait itself, which consists of agar, fishmeal, sodium nitrite, and a buffering solution. The bait is spherical in shape and rubbery in consistency.

  - LSU researchers and administration have had several meetings with the Environmental Protection Agency in an attempt to expedite the experimental use permitting process. They have also had several meetings with USDA WS Feral Swine Program and National Wildlife Research Center personnel in which guidance/assistance in the registration process was offered to LSU.

  - Utilizing the current process with EPA, the timeline for getting the bait to market, assuming no setbacks, is seven to ten years.

- SEAFWA/WMI Black Bear Resistant Product Testing Program/feral swine toxicant delivery devices:
    - WMI officially kicked off the Black Bear Resistant Testing Program on April 1, 2023. To date fifteen products have been tested. Of those, eight have passed testing against captive black bears and seven have failed. Tests consist of sixty minutes of contact time with bears in a zoo with bait/ attractant inside of the container being tested. Food (backpacking) containers, trashcans, and a composter have been tested.

    - No tests have been performed on feral swine toxicant delivery devices. Testing for these devices will consist of the same captive bear testing and additional testing in the field in locations where both feral swine and black bears are common.

- Updates on progress from last meeting (Bryant White, AFWA)
    - Hunter education pamphlet/one pager: Impacts of feral swine on popular game species in the United States
        - We continue to move this document forward and anticipate a draft for review soon.

- Next steps and Wrap-up Discussion (J. LaCour)

- Adjourn

AFWA FERAL SWINE WORKING GROUP MEETING

SEAFWA WHWG REPORT

March 20, 2024

The National Wild Pig Task Force was held in conjunction with the Vertebrate Pest Conference March 11-15, 2024. SEAFWA WHWG Members in attendance were Alan Leary (Missouri), Terri Brunjes (Kentucky), and Falyn Owens (North Carolina). Due to limited SEAFWA attendance, a SEAFWA Wild Hog Working Group meeting was not held. There are plans to hold a virtual joint SEAFWA/MAFWA meeting this spring to share information and updates from the Task Force meeting, as well as discuss any additional items brought up by members.

The agenda for the joint SEAFWA WHWG/MAFWA FSC meeting will include a review and discussion of the recently released "Research and Analysis of Policy and Law to Prevent Translocation of Live Feral Swine" document produced by Wildlife Management Institute in partnership with Southwick Associates and the Wildlife Restoration. This document provides information that could be used to inform working groups on the status of our goals and objectives. SEAFWA Objective 1) is to "Encourage uniform policies that prohibit the interstate movement of wild hogs and translocation of wild hogs". According to WMI, we are close to reaching this goal nationally, as most states have regulations or policies in place to prohibit importation and transportation of wild pigs. Only a few states allow importation, although most of these states restrict importation for only specific permitted activities.

During the NWPTF Policy Sub-Committee meeting, committee members discussed writing position statements to support states in wild pig eradication/reduction efforts. One position statement topic of interest was a wild pig sport hunting prohibition. Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission voted to prohibit sport hunting of wild pigs in December 2023. The amended regulation is currently going through the legislative process. This regulation should go into effect this September. When KY started this journey, the Department sought support from the KY Wild Pig Task Force. However, all members of the KY Task Force were employees of various government agencies. As you know government employees are often restricted in lobbying or showing support for regulatory amendments, especially if the issue is controversial, such as a pro-hunting agency requesting the removal of a hunting season. Luckily, many hunting and conservation organizations stepped up and provided support: National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, National Deer Association, and several others. Support from these organizations were essential in getting this regulation passed. However, support from wild pig organizations should have more influence. (By the way, another reason the pig hunting prohibition was successful, is that KY doesn't yet have a large pig hunting culture.) So, if a state had the opportunity to close a hunting season for wild pigs, and found themselves in a similar situation, NWPTF could provide a policy statement supporting the prohibition of a wild pig hunting season using sound scientific knowledge. So, what does this have to do with SEAFWA WHWG? Alan Leary, who is the MAFWA FSC and NWPTF Policy sub-committee chair, and I would like to combine the efforts of the policy sub-committee, SEAFWA WHWG, and MAFWA FSC to write this position statement. In 2020, SEAFWA authored a "Toolkit for Reducing the Spread of Wild Hogs in States with Small or Non-existent Populations" Version 2, in August 2020. This "how to" guide recommends a statewide elimination of sport hog hunting. Adding a policy statement from the National Wild Pig Task Force will provide additional necessary support for any state interested in closing wild pig hunting seasons to aid in eradication and reduction efforts.

Submitted by Terri Brunjes, Chair of SEAFWA Wild Hog Working Group

AFWA FERAL SWINE WORKING GROUP MEETING

MAFWA AD-HOC FERAL SWINE COMMITTEE REPORT

March 26, 2024

The National Wild Pig Task Force meeting was held in conjunction with the Vertebrate Pest Conference March 11-14, 2024. This was done with rather short notice when the International Wild Pig Conference was canceled. Because of the short notice and the Vertebrate Pest Conference being held on the west coast, only two MAFWA Feral Swine Committee (FSC) members were in attendance, ALAN LEARY (Missouri) and TERRI BRUNJES (Kentucky). Due to limited attendance, a MAFWA FSC meeting was not held during this conference. There are plans to hold a joint virtual meeting with the SEAFWA Wild Hog Working Group this spring to share information and updates from the Task Force meeting, as well as discuss any additional topics brought up by members.

The agenda for the joint meeting this spring will include a review and discussion of the recently released "Research and Analysis of Policy and Law to Prevent Translocation of Live Feral Swine" document produced by Wildlife Management Institute in partnership with Southwick Associates and the Wildlife Restoration. This document could be used to help inform the FSC on the status of some of our charges. MAFWA FSC has six Charges. Charge 3) is to "Encourage uniform policies on the translocation and interstate movement of feral swine". We are close to reaching this goal nationally, as most states have regulations or policies on the books to prohibit importation and transportation of feral swine. Only a few states allow importation of feral swine and most of these are in Northeast US: Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, and New Jersey. These states may not prohibit importation. However, most do restrict importation to only transport feral swine for specific permitted activities.

During the NWPTF Policy Sub-Committee meeting, committee members discussed some challenges associated with enforcing a ban on movement of feral swine. Primarily educating law enforcement agencies about these regulations and who has authority to enforce them. Mississippi State University produced a DVD about 11 years ago to educate law enforcement on feral swine. Maybe this could be updated and tailored to individual states.

Another topic that was discussed during the sub-committee meeting was the idea of the NWPTF writing position statements to support states in feral swine elimination/reduction efforts. One position statement topic of interest was to support states wanting to prohibit sport hunting of feral swine. One example where this would have been useful was from Kentucky. The KY Fish and Wildlife Commission voted to prohibit sport hunting of feral swine in December. Regulations were amended and are currently going through the legislative process. This regulation should go into effect in September. When KY started this journey, the Department needed support from the KY Wild Pig Task Force. However, all members of the KY Task Force were government employees. As you know government employees are often restricted in lobbying or showing support for regulatory amendments, especially if the issue is controversial, like removing a hunting season. Luckily, many hunting organizations stepped up and provided support: National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, National Deer Association, and several others. Another reason the hog hunting ban was successful, is that KY doesn't yet have a large hog hunting culture. The subcommittee thought that if a state had the opportunity to close a hunting season for feral hogs and found themselves in a similar situation, the NWPTF could provide a

position statement supporting the prohibition of a feral hog hunting season. We would like to make this a joint effort between the NWPTF Policy sub-committee, the MAFWA FSC, and the SEAFWA Wild Hog Working Group.

Another topic discussed during the Policy sub-committee meeting was toxicants. Kaput, a warfarin based toxicant was approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2017 and also approved for use in the state of Texas in 2017. However, there was a lot of opposition at the time so Texas withdrew that approval to allow the company more time for testing. In February 2024 Texas again approved the product for use in the state and it will likely be available for purchase later this spring. There was a presentation during the Conference by the manufacturer of the product that gave information about the testing that was done on the product since the initial approval in 2017.

The meeting of the Policy sub-committee fits with the MAFWA FSC's Charge 5) which is to "Encourage Partnerships among states and between state and federal entities to unify the battle against the spread of feral swine. This sub-committee is made up of people from a number of state and federal agencies as well as non-governmental organizations.

Additional topics for spring meeting:

How can the Committee assist member states? What are states expectations of the Committee?

Submitted by Alan Leary, Chair of the MAFWA Ad-hoc Feral Swine Committee 3/20/2024

Research Update: Chronic Wasting Disease in Feral Swine
March 2024

Research Objective: WS partnered with the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston to evaluate the potential interaction between wild pigs and prions in areas with varying CWD epidemiology in resident cervid species.

Approach: Brains, brainstems and lymph nodes from wild pigs were tested for the presence of infectious prions using the protein misfolding cyclic amplification (PMCA) technique. PMCA uses noninfectious cellular prion protein (PrP^{C}) as a substrate to detect infectious prions (PrP^{Sc}) in a sample through an amplification process. PMCA analyses were performed using heterologous deer PrP^{C} substrate or homologous pig PrP^{C} substrate that were able to identify deer prions or infectious particles generated *de novo* in the pig host, respectively. Mouse models were used to test for the potential for wild pigs to transmit CWD by injecting selected wild pig tissues into mice expressing the porcine and cervid versions of PrP^{C}.

Results/Discussion: Using PMCA CWD prions were detected in brain, brainstem, and lymph nodes from wild pigs, indicating that wild pigs are naturally exposed to CWD. Detection was considerably higher using the cervid PrP^{C} substrate, suggesting that swine are exposed to CWD prions, but conversion of noninfectious pig PrP^{C} to infectious PrP^{Sc} is inefficient. Mouse bioassays aligned with the *in vitro* data and demonstrated that the PrP^{Sc} titers carried by wild pigs are not enough to induce disease. Despite the absence of disease, the detection of prions in wild pig tissues indicates a potential for scavenging swine to move CWD across the landscape, thereby playing a potential role in CWD epidemiology.

Next steps: This research suggests that wild pigs may move prions by depositing them onto the landscape in their feces following consumption of CWD-positive cervid tissues. To evaluate this potential, future research will assess wild pig digestive tracts and feces for the presence of CWD prions. Additional phases of research will investigate whether CWD prions may adapt to wild pig tissues over time, and will further test the host range (including zoonotic potential) of CWD prions passaged in swine.