



Committee of the Whole Report

Report Number:	ED2022-004
Meeting Date:	January 11, 2022
Title:	Feral Pigs in Kawartha Lakes
Description:	The need for public awareness of the potential threat, call for active reporting of sightings of feral pigs and drafting Kawartha Lakes Action Plan
Author and Title:	Kelly Maloney, Economic Development Officer - Agriculture

Recommendations:

That Report ED2022-004, Feral Pigs in Kawartha Lakes, be received;

That staff initiate public education on the environmental damage and risks of allowing an invasive feral pig population to be established in Kawartha Lakes and the need for public reporting of all sightings;

That sightings of feral pigs reported in the provincial database from within Kawartha Lakes be actively monitored by staff;

That staff develop and report back to Council, in Q2 2022, a recommended program to deal with feral pigs in Kawartha Lakes; and

That this recommendation be brought forward to Council for consideration at the next Regular Council Meeting.

(Acting) Department Head: _____

Financial/Legal/HR/Other: _____

Chief Administrative Officer: _____

Background:

At the Agricultural Development Advisory Committee (ADAC) Meeting of December 9, 2021, ADAC adopted the following resolution:

Moved by A. Shea

Seconded by R. Bonis

That Council take immediate action on public education on the environmental damage and risks of allowing an invasive feral pig population to be established in Kawartha Lakes; and that sightings of feral pigs in Kawartha Lakes be actively tracked; and that an integral program be developed to deal with feral pigs in Kawartha Lakes.

This report addresses that recommendation.

Rationale:

A wild pig is any pig that is not contained or under the physical control of a person. This includes free roaming pigs that are:

- domesticated pigs (for example, pot-bellied pigs and farmed domestic breeds, including heritage breeds)
- Eurasian wild boar
- hybrids of domestic pigs and Eurasian wild boar

Wild pigs are not native to Ontario and can have a negative impact on native wildlife and ecosystems. They have high reproductive potential which means that populations can increase in number and spread rapidly, making their impacts more severe. Impacts to the natural environment include:

- preying upon native plants and wildlife
- competing with native wildlife for food, water, and space
- rooting into the ground with their tusks and snouts to dig for roots, tubers, bulbs, worms, insects, slugs, and snails
- trampling and wallowing, which can cause erosion, impact water quality, and degrade natural areas
- spreading disease to wildlife

Other impacts include:

- damage to crops and pasturelands
- spreading disease to livestock, pets and humans
- aggressive behaviour to humans or pets
- high costs to control wild pigs if they become established in parts of Ontario

Wild pigs are not only a threat to the province's natural environment, but they also pose a significant risk to other animals by transmitting diseases such as African Swine Fever. The Province's goal is to reduce the disease risk these animals pose to Ontario's domestic herd and the extensive damage they can do to agricultural crops. In some areas of the world, invasive wild pigs are not only causing problems in rural landscapes, but they have become urban pests. For example, in certain European cities, groups of wild pigs can be seen roaming through the city, in parks, and rooting through garbage cans.

In Ontario, a small number of Eurasian wild boars have been imported and raised as alternative livestock on farms for meat. To protect Ontario's natural environment and domestic pig industry, the Eurasian wild boar will be phased out of Ontario by 2024.

Domesticated pigs originated from Eurasian wild boar thousands of years ago. It is because of this ancestry that escaped, domesticated pigs can resemble their Eurasian wild boar ancestors when they become feral. For example, within a matter of months, domesticated pigs can grow a dense coat to help them to survive cold winter climates. Based on experiences from other jurisdictions, it is clear that the least costly and most effective approach for managing wild pigs is to act early. Once populations become established, eradication may no longer be feasible.

There is currently no firm evidence to suggest that there are established populations of wild pigs that are breeding and self-sustaining in Ontario or in Kawartha Lakes, and we must do what we can to keep it that way. As stated, once established, there is little that can be done to eradicate wild pigs from an area.

The least costly and most effective approach for managing wild pigs is to act early. As such, Ontario is taking a proactive approach to address this serious threat. They are working with experts from other jurisdictions and relevant agencies and organizations to implement actions that are outlined in Ontario's Strategy to Address the Threat of Invasive Wild Pigs (see Appendix A). No single government, ministry, conservation organization or sector can achieve this goal alone. The goal will be achieved by

leveraging the resources and expertise of many. It will depend on strong inter-governmental collaboration, particularly between the Ontario Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry (NDMNR) and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), as well as support from other jurisdictions, partners, academia, stakeholders, and the public.

The Province continues to collect and monitor reports of invasive wild pig sightings from the public. These reports help them learn more about the number and location of wild pigs in the province. Based on the sightings reported by the public, the Province does research that includes on-the-ground follow up in areas where reports suggest a high likelihood that wild pigs are present.

At these locations, Ministry staff:

- engage with residents to learn as much as possible about wild pig activity
- set up trail cameras to detect whether wild pigs are still in the area
- Where appropriate, ministry staff may trap and remove invasive wild pigs from the environment.

From the Ontario Strategy, Action 1.7, the Province will support municipalities, where appropriate, in determining policy and legislative actions to address wild pigs in their communities. Under the Municipal Act, a municipality may pass by-laws respecting matters that involve animals, such as pets and livestock. In Ontario, municipalities have effectively used various tools, including by-laws, to address animal control. For instance, some municipalities do not allow livestock, including pot-bellied pigs, to be kept in certain areas (e.g., areas zoned for residential purposes) and/or have prohibitions against livestock at large. Municipalities may consider opportunities to supplement provincial regulations, such as pet registration, to better track and monitor local pet pig ownership. OMAFRA encourages municipalities to develop by-laws to address issues of escaped, abandoned or otherwise uncontained animals and livestock, and provides support, where appropriate. Kawartha Lakes regulates animals through By-Law 2021-072 A By-Law to Regulate Animals in Kawartha Lakes. A variety of controls are in place, including a restriction on keeping livestock or agricultural animals including swine on properties zoned and primarily used for residential purposes; a prohibition on keeping pigs except as agricultural livestock; and prohibitions against animals being at large.

Objective 3 within the Ontario Strategy is to use a coordinated approach to remove wild pigs from the natural environment. The province is committed to responding to high risk sightings of wild pigs. Response techniques that have been successful in eradicating wild pigs elsewhere have involved removing entire groups of pigs simultaneously. This method requires coordinated efforts by trained professionals. Management experiences from other jurisdictions, as well as Ontario-specific research, will inform the province's approach for removing wild pigs from the natural environment.

In order to manage incoming reports, a centralized database was created to maintain reports of wild pig sightings. Ontario's wild pig reporting initiative was launched in 2018 along with a request for the public to report sightings. Sightings are received through a dedicated email address (wildpigs@ontario.ca), a phone line (1-833-933-2355), and an online platform at iNaturalist Wild Pig Reporting Ontario <https://inaturalist.ca/projects/ontario-wild-pig-reporting>

All sightings are analyzed and stored in a central database. The ongoing collection and monitoring of sightings is critical for the NDMNRF to detect, and where appropriate, control wild pigs.

The province has developed and shares communications to encourage public reporting of wild pig sightings. Communication efforts have provided the public with information on invasive wild pigs and soliciting their help in reporting sightings of pigs outside of a fence. Communications have been released through print, radio, online news, and social media. Preliminary analysis suggests that media and outreach, including instructions on where and how to submit reports of wild pigs, significantly increased the number of sightings received by the NDMNRF. Ongoing communications by NDMNRF and OMAFRA will ensure the public's continued involvement in wild pig reporting and will continue to be necessary to address occurrences of wild pigs.

Public reporting of sightings within Durham Region recently resulted in the successful trapping and removal of a sounder of wild pigs by the Ministry. Although hunting wild pigs is prohibited in Ontario, hunters still have an important role in addressing the wild pig problem. Given the knowledge and time that hunters spend outdoors across the province, the Ministry is seeking their partnership and expertise in reporting wild pig sightings. When an accidental pig escape occurs, hunters may also assist pig owners in recapturing or dispatching the escaped pig as soon as possible. NDMNRF is committed to filling knowledge gaps about wild pigs in the province. Hunters may have an important role in ongoing and future wild pig research that is conducted by the

ministry, academics, and partners. Participation from the public, agricultural communities, academia, conservation organizations, Indigenous communities and organizations, and other jurisdictions will continue to be integral in addressing the threat of invasive wild pigs in Ontario.

It is important to understand current roles of various jurisdictions within Ontario. NDMNRF provides provincial oversight of Ontario's natural resources, which includes protecting Ontario's biodiversity while promoting economic opportunities in the resource sector and supporting outdoor recreation opportunities. In general, NDMNRF is the lead ministry for addressing threats of invasive species on the natural environment, including threats posed by invasive wild pigs. The ministry provides oversight for the Invasive Species Act, 2015 which sets out a legislative framework that enables the identification of invasive species and includes provisions to prevent invasive species from entering the province, to control their spread, and for removal and eradication.

Municipalities in Ontario play an important role in providing and delivering valuable programs and services to meet the needs of their residents. Under the Municipal Act, 2001, a municipality can pass and enforce by-laws. By-laws can address the control of animals such as livestock at large and domesticated animals subsequently deemed feral. They can also set and enforce rules that, for example, generally limit or prohibit pot-bellied pig ownership in areas that have been zoned for residential purposes. Municipalities can educate and inform the public regarding the importance of reporting sightings of wild pigs, and the damage that wild populations could cause. Municipalities can also appoint staff as wildlife control agents, and where permitted by municipal by-law and other applicable laws, could develop a localized plan to swiftly address wild pigs within their jurisdiction.

As noted, this issue poses a significant threat to the natural environment and agricultural sector, as well as potential personal risk to the citizens of Kawartha Lakes. As such, the noted need for a collaborative approach to public education, reporting of sightings and coordinated action across jurisdictions is prudent to prevent the establishment of reproducing wild populations within Kawartha Lakes.

If supported, appropriate staff will develop a plan of action for Kawartha Lakes, in collaboration with NDMNRF and OMAFRA, ADAC, and relevant City Departments to be presented to council for approval, in order to get ahead of, and keep ahead of the potential threat posed by wild pigs in Kawartha Lakes.

Other Alternatives Considered:

As the jurisdiction for wildlife management in Ontario rests with the provincial government, Council may choose to do nothing. This option is not recommended. As noted, this issue poses a significant threat to the natural environment and agricultural sector, as well as potential personal risk to the citizens of Kawartha Lakes. As such, the noted need for a collaborative approach to public education, reporting of sightings and coordinated action across jurisdictions is prudent to prevent the establishment of reproducing wild populations within Kawartha Lakes.

Alignment to Strategic Priorities

This report relates to the strategic priorities within the 2020-2023 Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan of a Healthy Environment and a Vibrant and Growing Economy.

Financial/Operation Impacts:

This report has no financial impact. Should Council support the recommendation, a future staff report would quantify any costs.

Consultations:

Agricultural Development Advisory Committee
Communications, Advertising and Marketing Division
Municipal Law Enforcement and Licencing Division

Attachments:

Appendix A – Ontario's Strategy to Address the Threat of Invasive Wild Pigs



Ontario's Strategy
to Address the Threat

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(Acting) Department Head: Richard Holy (Acting) Director of Development Services