

# Wild Boar Distribution in Scotland

## Introduction

Wild living pigs (including wild boar and their hybrids) pose a disease control risk as potential vectors of Classical and African Swine Fever, swine vesicular disease (SVD) and Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), among others. In the event of an outbreak of one of these notifiable diseases in Scotland, it would be of benefit to know the locations of potential vectors, so that possible impacts on control strategies in domestic livestock could be gauged. In addition to disease risks, free-living boar can also cause agricultural damage.



Breeding in the wild



Typical wild boar damage

Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA) undertook a desktop survey to identify possible locations of pigs living in the wild. The survey also aimed to establish the distribution of captive herds or individual wild boar/hybrids, since wild boar may be kept for a wide variety of reasons (see table 2), and only some information is held centrally by Scottish Government. Results from the survey will assist in any assessment of the likelihood of free roaming (non-captive) wild boar/ hybrids being present in an area.

## Methods

In GB, all captive wild boar and their hybrids are required to be licensed by Local Authorities under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 (DWA) or the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 (ZLA). Local Authorities in Scotland were requested to provide information on the number and location of current/previous premises with captive wild boar and their hybrids licensed under these two Acts, and whether they were aware of any pigs living in the wild within their area.

Scottish Government's Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate (RPID) and Animal Health Divisional Offices within Scotland were also asked to provide information on the presence of free-roaming or captive wild boar/hybrid herds within their area. Such information provided a useful cross-reference for the Local Authority data.

In addition, information was sought on the extent of free-roaming (escaped) populations of wild boar. The Forestry Commission (FC) and the police were contacted in some areas, and anecdotal reports of sightings were also recorded from the internet and other media sources.

## Results

### Captive animals

Table 1: Number of Scottish Local Authorities that have issued licences to keep wild boar or wild boar hybrids

Type of licence issued	No. of Local Authorities issuing licence for wild boar	No. of licences issued
DWA	6 (+1*)	11 (+2*)
ZLA	0 (2**)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 (+1*)</b>	<b>11 (+2*)</b>

\* One authority had decided to allow two establishments with wild boar to operate unlicensed.  
\*\* Two zoos were reported. One no longer kept wild boar, and the other had other species of wild suidae.  
One premises (listed under DWA licences) was in the process of re-licensing from the DWA to ZLA licence.

Table 2: Summary of locations of premises that either hold or have held wild boar/hybrids (based on information from all survey responses).

Status	Region	Purpose
Current	Midlothian	Farmed?
Current	Moray	Farmed?
Current	Moray	Farmed
Current	Highland	Woodland restoration
Current	Dumfries & Galloway	Farmed
Current	Dumfries & Galloway	Shooting
Current	Stirlingshire	Shooting?
Current	Stirlingshire	Farmed
Current	Perth & Kinross	Farmed
Current	Perth & Kinross	Farmed
Current	Borders	Farmed
Current	Highland	Farmed?
Current	Highland	Private or display?
Unknown status	Dumfries & Galloway	Personal consumption or shooting?
No longer current	East Lothian	Pet?
No longer current	Highland	Woodland restoration project
No longer current	Moray	Unknown
No longer current	Moray	Farmed
No longer current	Moray	Farmed
No longer current	N Lanarkshire	Farmed
No longer current	Borders	Farmed
No longer current	Dumfries & Galloway	Shooting
No longer current	Stirlingshire	Farmed

### Free living populations

#### North/central Dumfries and Galloway

Reports of free-living wild boar first appeared in the early 2000's. In 2009, reports of immature animals in this area, suggest that this is a breeding metapopulation. Video recordings provide further confirmation of the presence of wild boar here.

#### South Dumfries and Galloway

Information suggests that free-roaming wild boar have been present since at least 2004 and possibly longer. Evidence includes reports of damage to farmland, numerous sightings, including piglets, and much anecdotal evidence of hunting activity, including a local farm offering wild boar stalking.

#### Lochaber

Forest Enterprise reported that wild boar had escaped from an estate in 2007. However, anecdotal evidence is of free-roaming boar or hybrids with piglets being present in the area up to a year earlier. The highest estimate for the number of escaped animals is 60, but actual numbers are unknown, and some reports suggest far fewer boar are at large. The estate in question did not have a DWA licence at the time of survey but claims to keep 'iron age pigs'. The local authority are of the opinion that the animals are pigs and therefore they may legitimately be free roaming on common grazing.

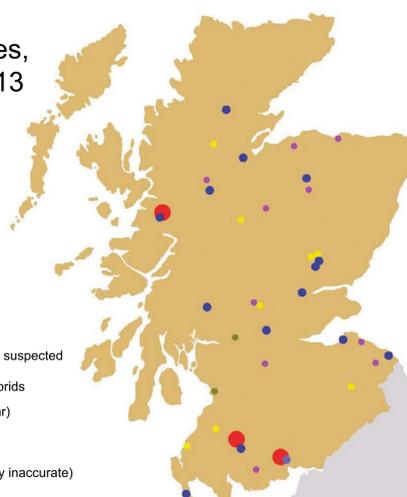
#### Other sightings

There have been a number of other sightings of animals in the wild. Some of these have been linked to escaped, and later recaptured, individuals. Other reports may have been misidentification of captive animals while in large enclosures, and a small number are of dubious quality and thought unlikely to be wild boar.

## Conclusions

The survey returns from Local Authorities, combined with information from other sources, suggest that there are approximately 1,300+ wild boar in captivity, which are held across 13 sites in Scotland. This would fall to around 900 if two sites identified as closing, or possibly now closed, were excluded.

In addition, there are almost certainly three meta-populations of wild boar (or hybrids) living and breeding outside of captivity in Scotland. While there are occasional reports of other wild boar escapes, there is currently no evidence to suggest that other breeding populations have become established.



- Free-living & Breeding population suspected
- Current premises with boar or hybrids
- Unknown status (probably no boar)
- No longer keep boar
- Sightings or recorded escapees
- Sightings of poor quality (probably inaccurate)

Current and past locations of captive wild boar and sightings/records outside of captivity

## Wildlife Management

Authors:  
Steve Campbell  
Dr Gill Hartley

SASA, Roddinglaw Road  
Edinburgh, EH12 9FJ  
Scotland

T: +44 (0) 131 244 8871  
T: +44 (0) 131 244 8804  
F: +44 (0) 131 244 8940

E: [steve.campbell@sasa.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:steve.campbell@sasa.gsi.gov.uk)  
E: [gill.hartley@sasa.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:gill.hartley@sasa.gsi.gov.uk)  
[www.sasa.gov.uk](http://www.sasa.gov.uk)

Report a sighting of wild boar in Scotland [here](#)

This poster was prepared by the SASA Photography Unit. All photographs and text are SASA © Crown Copyright except where otherwise indicated.