

TENNESSEE FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

2016 Policy Development



Hunting Hogs with Dogs

Issue

Wild hog issues persist in Tennessee. Likewise, in the legislature, the matter has become extremely contested over the past few legislative sessions. Last session, some lawmakers believed taking a different strategy than recommendations of the Wild Hog Eradication Action Team (WHEAT) would help alleviate pressures in areas densely populated by hogs. WHEAT recommends restricting the use of dogs to hunt in order to disincentive hunters from potentially spreading the animals across the state for recreation. WHEAT members disagreed with legislation allowing hunting with dogs without a depredation permit. Meanwhile, resources are being utilized to defend the position. The comprehensive hog management strategy is one which is unique in the country. State biologists remain confident the strategy is working and regulating the use of dogs for hog control is a major component.

Background

In 2011 new regulations took effect regarding how the state manages wild hogs. Wild hogs are no longer considered a big game animal but now treated as a nuisance species. In the late 1990s, wild hogs were only present in 15 counties. Currently, wild hogs are in 80 of the 95 counties in Tennessee. The experience of Tennessee and other states is that sport hunting caused the expansion of wild hog populations. Hogs are captured and transported to different locations to establish a population. Because of the rapid pace of reproduction, numbers of wild hogs can expand within just a few years. Landowners and up to ten other individuals with permission of the landowner can shoot wild hogs year-round during the day without limit and trap with bait outside of big game seasons. Furthermore, landowners may obtain an exemption from their TWRA regional office enabling them to kill wild hogs at night using a spotlight, and to trap year-round.

WHEAT believes hunting with dogs should only be allowed through permit because it may encourage more sport hunting and therefore work against eradication. Also, dog hunting is not an effective means of eradication because large number of wild hogs are not harvested at once. Hogs are chased from one property to adjacent properties. What was once one person's problem becomes another's.

Legislation has been introduced on the state level to allow unregulated dog hunting either statewide or in specific counties. WHEAT and the Farm Bureau has opposed this legislation because it does not fit the current strategy for controlling the expansion of wild hog populations and eradicating wild hog populations in a uniform manner.

Questions:

1. Are wild hogs causing damage in your county?
2. Do you believe hunting with dogs will improve or compound hog problems?
3. Is Tennessee's wild hog eradication strategy working?
4. Should the legislature appropriate funds to help eradicate hog populations?

Farm Bureau Policy:

Wildlife Pests and Wildlife Management Programs (Partial)

Wild hogs are not a native wildlife species to be protected and managed. Wild hogs are a nuisance species rapidly spreading across the state. Property damage, disease, and lost income from wild hogs are an imminent threat to Tennessee's production agriculture. We support TWRA's and the Wild Hog Eradication Team's (WHEAT) efforts toward controlling the spread of wild hogs. We believe this can best be accomplished by:

1. Stopping the spread of wild hogs and establishment of populations,
2. Eradicating small populations, and
3. The contraction and reductions of core populations.