



EURASIAN BOARS NO LONGER "FAIR GAME" IN NEW YORK

Proposed Regulations Would Prohibit Hunting or Trapping of Wild Boars in New York

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner (DEC) Joe Martens today announced the proposal of new regulations that would prohibit hunting or trapping of free-ranging Eurasian boars in New York. The proposal is designed to ensure maximum effectiveness of DEC's statewide eradication efforts. Public comments on the proposed regulations will be accepted until January 25, 2014.

"Eurasian boars are a great threat to natural resources, agricultural interests, private property and public safety wherever they occur," Commissioner Martens said. "It's important that we do all in our power to ensure that this invasive species does not become established in the wild anywhere in New York State."

Eurasian boars were brought to North America centuries ago and wild populations numbering in the millions now occur across much of the southern U.S. In recent years, wild boar populations have been appearing in more northern states too, often as a result of escapes from enclosed shooting facilities that offer "wild boar hunts."

Governor Cuomo signed legislation on October 21, 2013 which immediately prohibited the importation, breeding or introduction to the wild of any Eurasian boars. Furthermore, the law prohibits possession, sale, transport or marketing of live Eurasian boars as of September 1, 2015. The new law was an essential step in the state's efforts to prevent Eurasian boars from becoming established in the wild.

However, there are already small numbers of Eurasian boars on the landscape in New York. Since 2000, wild boars have been reported in many counties across the state, and breeding in the wild has been confirmed in at least six counties (Tioga, Cortland, Onondaga, Clinton, Sullivan and Delaware) in recent years. DEC is working closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services program to remove any Eurasian boars that are reported in New York, and to date more than 150 animals have been captured and destroyed. However, eradication is expensive, time consuming and requires a great deal of manpower.

"Many hunters have offered to assist our efforts by hunting for boars wherever they occur, but experience has shown this to be counter-productive," Martens said. "As long as swine may be pursued by hunters, there is a potential conflict with our swine eradication efforts. Eurasian boars often join together to form a 'sounder', the name for a group of pigs sometimes numbering 20 or more individuals. Shooting individual boars as opportunities arise is ineffective as an eradication method, and this often causes the remaining animals to disperse and be more difficult to remove."

Hunters pursuing wild boars in locations where baited traps have been established by DEC or USDA can also undermine these costly and labor-intensive capture efforts. Shooting may remove one or two animals but the rest of the sounder scatters and rarely comes back together as a group, thereby hampering eradication efforts. In addition to prohibiting take of free-ranging swine by hunters, the proposed regulation would prohibit anyone from disturbing traps set for wild boars or otherwise interfering with Eurasian boar eradication activities. Hunting wild boar can be done at hunting preserves until 2015.

The proposed regulations provide necessary exceptions for state and federal wildlife agencies, law enforcement agencies, and others who are authorized by DEC to take Eurasian boar to alleviate nuisance, property damage, or threats to public health or welfare.

Commissioner Martens encouraged anyone who observes a Eurasian boar (dead or alive) in the wild in New York to report it as soon as possible to the nearest DEC regional wildlife office or to: fwwildlf@gw.dec.state.ny.us and include "Feral Swine" in the subject line.

Since it is sometimes difficult to distinguish a domestic pig, pot belly pig or Eurasian boar based solely on a description, reporting of all feral swine is encouraged. Please report the number of animals seen, whether any of them were piglets, the date, and the exact location (county, town, distance and direction from an intersection, nearest landmark, etc.). Photographs of feral swine are greatly appreciated, so please try and get a picture and include it with your report.

Text of the proposed regulation was published in the New York State Register on December 11, 2013. The full text of the regulation change and instructions for submitting comments can be found on DEC's website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/34113.html>. Comments on the proposed regulations can be sent by email to WildlifeRegs@gw.dec.state.ny.us or mailed to: Kelly Stang, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4754. Hard copies of the full text may be requested from the same address listed above.