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In the News, Fall 2007

Joe N. Caudell

Purdue University

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In the News

JOE N. CAUDELL, USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services, 901 W. State Street, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-2089, USA

New trend in feral hog control worries biologists

The *Tribune-Democrat* of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, reported several disturbing trends about the state's 2006 feral hog hunt. Initially,



Feral hog in field.
(Photo courtesy USDA/Wildlife Services)

it was thought that feral hogs existed only in small, isolated pockets within the state, consisting of <30 individuals per pocket. But, during the fall 2006 hunting season, at least 200 hogs were taken from 2 counties. USDA/APHIS Wildlife Services has been studying the feral hog population and believes that there are at least 3,000 hogs in the state, and it has found evidence that the hogs are breeding in several counties. Wildlife biologists theorize that additional hunting pressure put on the hogs by large hunting parties is causing the hogs to disperse over a larger area than when they are pursued by individual hunters.

Feral hog issues have pork producers and outfitters at odds

Pork producers in Iowa are concerned about the potential effect of feral hogs on the hog market in their state, according to a Radio Iowa News report. Hog raisers' primary concern is that feral hogs can carry pseudorabies and swine brucellosis and could pass those 2 diseases to domestic hogs. Pork in Iowa is an \$11 to \$12 billion dollar industry, making Iowa the number one pork producing state in the country, the report said. Feral hogs also cause

damage to farm fields and prey on wildlife in the area.

Iowa lawmakers in 2007 voted to classify wild Russian and European boars as dangerous animals because of the potential for feral hogs to cause significant economic and ecological damage. According to the *High Plains Midwest Ag Journal*, however, in 2006 the Iowa's Feral Swine Taskforce was unsuccessful in its lobbying efforts for legislation to make it illegal to import and release feral hogs. Much of the opposition is from outfitters who argue that any ban would hurt their business, the report said.

Hogzilla loses its crown

The Associated Press reported that on May 3, 2007, an 11-year-old hunter in Alabama killed a 477-kg feral hog with a .50 caliber pistol. This new big pig outweighs the famous Hogzilla by >25 kilograms.

Ban on slaughter likely to increase feral horse numbers

A potential ban on the slaughter of horses for food may increase feral horse populations, according to an Associated Press report in March 2007.



Feral horses in Kentucky.
(Photo by Carl Voglewede, courtesy USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services)

Recent changes in laws regarding the slaughter of domestic horses may spell problems for wildlife managers in the future, the report said. Feral horses are a growing problem in Kentucky and other parts of the country. Increasing opposition to horse slaughter for overseas consumption has led to an increase of unwanted horses. Horses that are no longer suitable for racing, work, or riding are often sent to slaughter. But as public opposition to slaughter has grown, many of these businesses no longer process horse meat. The USDA reported that the number of horses sent to slaughter has decreased from 300,000 in 1990 to 90,000 in 2005.

Many members of Congress also have been pushing for a national ban on the slaughter of horses for human consumption. California is currently the only state that has such a ban, but similar laws are under consideration in Kentucky, Maryland, New York, and Illinois. Connecticut has made it illegal to sell horse meat in public places. Many states have tightened the labeling and transportation requirements governing horses bound for slaughter. Many horses that once would be sent to slaughter are now being turned loose.

The Associated Press noted that in eastern Kentucky residents have reported an increase in the size of horse herds that roam free and that the number of feral horses may now be in the thousands. In many areas of the country, free-roaming feral horses cause damage to the environment, including damaging fragile habitats and displacing wildlife. With the decrease in value of horses and the further reduction of options for feral horses, the problems associated with them may expand.

Proposed bill would change status of feral hogs in Wisconsin

The *Lacrosse Tribune* and the *Brownfield: Ag News for America* website reported on a bill recently introduced into the Wisconsin legislature to classify the feral hog as a "harmful, wild animal." The bill would make it illegal to possess and propagate feral hogs. This is the second attempt to introduce the bill. Awareness about the problems associated with feral hogs has increased because feral hogs are believed to be the source of pseudorabies in 2 hog herds in Clark County.

Bear attack may be one of many to come

The *Idaho Statesman* reported in April 2007 that a man was attacked by a grizzly bear near his home in Tetonia, Idaho. The bear was feeding on a moose when the man went outside to determine why his dog was barking. The bear attacked the man, who sustained injuries on his head, shoulder, back, and buttocks before the bear left. The victim was able to get back to his house on his own and call for help.

Teton and Fairmont counties are 2 of the fastest growing counties in Idaho, and officials from Idaho Game and Fish predict that as more homes are placed in grizzly country, the number of attacks will rise unless people remain vigilant.

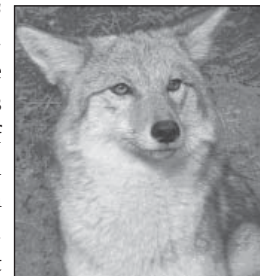
Bear kills boy in Utah wilderness

A black bear snatched an 11-year-old boy from his tent in a Utah wilderness campsite, killing the camper on June 18, the Associated Press reported. The incident took place in American Fork Canyon where other campers reported encountering the bear at the same campsite the same day.

The rare incident is the first human fatality due to a black bear in the state, a Utah Division of Wildlife Resources spokesperson said. Wildlife Services personnel tracked and killed the bear later the same day.

Coyote attacks child in New Jersey suburb

The *Ashbury Park Press* of Neptune, New Jersey, reported that a coyote emerged from the woods in a suburban area of Middleton and grabbed a 20-month-old child in the family's backyard. The child was treated at a local hospital for tooth and scratch marks. The coyote was running with at least 2 or 3 other coyotes, and officials believe that 5 pets have been killed by the same pack.



Coyote.
(Photo by Holly Smith)



Pigeons overrunning a public space. (Photo courtesy Innolytics, LLC)

New contraceptive bait approved for pigeons

Innolytics, LLC, was granted registration in May 2007 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for OvoControl™ P, a new nonhormonal oral contraception product that controls egg hatchability in pigeons. The core technology for OvoControl P centers on the proven ability to reduce the hatchability of eggs by feeding treated bait to birds during the reproductive season. The effect is fully reversible, and care has been taken to develop a feeding system that limits exposure to nontarget species.

“OvoControl interferes with the formation of the vitelline membrane that separates the yolk and white in the egg, so no embryo is ever formed,” said Dr. Alexander MacDonald, chief scientific officer for Innolytics. “The active ingredient, nicarbazin, approved more than 50 years ago, was originally developed to prevent a disease in poultry. Due to its unique chemistry, the product represents no secondary hazards,” he said.

For example, a bird of prey which consumes treated pigeons will not be affected by the product. Bird contraception is supported by the leading animal welfare and conservation organizations in the U.S. and abroad.

Established in 2003, Innolytics, LLC is a privately-held company that focuses on developing humane population management technology for wildlife. For further information, see the company website at www.hatchcontrol.com

Plane crash kills 2 USDA/Wildlife Services employees

Two men doing predator control work were killed when a state-owned airplane they were flying crashed in rural Wayne County, Utah, the Associated Press reported. The single engine craft went down on June 1. The cause of the crash was unknown. The victims, Joseph Harris and Glen Stevenson, were federal employees with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Wildlife Services program. More information about this tragic loss appears in this issue’s In Memory page.

Mountain lion mauls hiker in California park

The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported in January 2007 that a 70-year old man hiking in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park was attacked by a mountain lion. The man’s wife was able to beat back the lion with a stick and save her husband’s life.

This is one of 11 attacks and many other close calls that have occurred since a ballot initiative (Proposition 111) was passed into law, making mountain lions a protected species. Managers had reported 10 years earlier that the lion population needed to be reduced by 25 to 50% to reduce competition for food and thereby reduce attacks on people. Since then, mountain lions have moved into marginal habitats that are in close contact with humans. For the 100 years prior to the initiative, there were only 5 mountain lion attacks on people reported. *