Population monitoring and management

A challenging decade for wild boar populations in Europe: African swine fever and different management strategies have driven diverse trends across the continent

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As a cosmopolitan species, wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) population density has been increasing till recent times across Europe, as a result of environmental changes as well as due to favourable biological and ecological characteristics and life-history traits of the species. The fact that wild boar has a very high reproductive potential and that it is an omnivorous species with very diverse food habits may have contributed to the rapid spread of the species around the globe. The increase of wild boar abundance has various impacts on the economy and the environment through the destruction of agricultural land, traffic collisions, and health risks as the growth of wild boar populations has the potential to spread infections and zoonoses. Recently, wild boar and domestic pigs have been affected by a highly contagious viral disease, African swine fever (ASF). The disease appeared in Europe in 2014 in the Baltic countries and Poland, from where it spread to the west. The disease per se, but also accompanied by different mitigation measures (mainly focused on lethal measures, i.e., more intensive hunting actions, also by using several modern tools for increasing hunting efficiency as well as to motivate hunters for culling as many wild boar as possible), have affected previously consistent increasing trend of wild boar, i.e., they have caused recently diverse trends across the continent. We analysed the hunting bags of wild boar from almost all European countries from 2000 to 2024 and calculated among-countries variability in population trends to determine whether and how the occurrence of ASF and the various management strategies used to control the disease have affected the wild boar population in Europe.