June 4th, 2020

**Comments on DRAFT: Ontario’s Strategy to Address the Threat of Invasive Wild Pigs**

To whom it may concern,

We would like to address the topic of the draft concerning Ontario's Strategy to Address the Threat of Invasive Wild Pigs. We have recently been informed about this draft by numerous people, and would like to raise a few points and concerns after researching the projected proposal. We speak not only on behalf of our family but on behalf of numerous people that are directly and indirectly involved in the wild boar farming industry.

We all raise very important aspects of how this draft would affect us including losing our businesses, and how it would affect our local community. We have also included reasonable solutions and compromises in the following paragraphs that you should consider and we would highly appreciate you spending the time to hear what we have to say.

**OBJECTIVE 1. Prevent the introduction of pigs into the natural environment.**

Our farm stands out from regular heritage pork breeders, as we own a combination of red deer and wild boars on our farm. Our Swiss background in hunting and forestry serves us well in our farming endeavor.

The proposed “Draft: Ontario's Strategy to Address the Threat of Invasive Wild Pigs” will endanger our business and livelihood for which we have worked very hard to build during the past 22 years.

*Action 1.2 Work with partners to develop, update and promote best management practices for outdoor pig containment, transporting pigs, and addressing escapes.*

To contain our wild boars, we have installed a 6’ deer fence and have the fence dug 1’ into the ground so that they cannot go under the fence. We have also installed an electric power line inside the deer fence, so they do not get tempted to interact with the page wire fence.

To assure safe and proper handling of our animals, we have a proven handling facility to handle and load the animals securely and eliminate risk of escape.

To warrant biosecurity on our farm, it has been closed to the public for many years and we follow the recommended biosecurity regiment recommended by the government.

*Action 1.3 Collaborate with partners to develop and deliver outreach for pig owners and producers on their obligations if a pig escape occurs.*

The obligation to report escaped wild boars or deer to MNRF has been in place for many years (The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. 1997). It is in our own interest to assure our animals are contained as they are very valuable livestock and any loss would represent a significant loss in revenue.

*Action 1.4 Coordinate with federal and industry-led initiatives to support traceability of escaped pigs (e.g. PigTrace).*

Our farm already participates in the PigTrace and Provincial Premises Registry (PPR) program, which is essential in reuniting escaped animals with their owners and assure that all animals are accounted for should an escape occur while pigs are being transported.

*Action 1.5 Collaborate with partners in developing and promoting guidance for responsible pig ownership.*

Our wild boars are not raised for pets. All of them are solely raised for slaughter and we do not sell any live animals.

For the last 22 years we have built a loyal clientele through local farmers’ markets in Ottawa, Vankleek Hill and Cornwall. We also sell to 2 retail locations, the Glengarry Market and the Finch Market as well as to a series of eastern Ontario restaurants and butcher shops.

*Action 1.6 Prohibit hunting of wild pigs in Ontario*

With our hunting and forestry background, we are well aware that mistakes can be made while hunting wild boars to control their spread. The leading sow should never be shot, as this will interfere with the hierarchy of the herd and will encourage breeding and splitting up of the sounder, forcing different parties to relocate and thus cause more widespread damage to crops. In an intact sounder with a leading sow, breeding is controlled. Only a specific number of sows within the sounder get bred and not, as widely believed by the general public, all females of breeding age in the group.

**OBJECTIVE 2. Address the risk posed by Eurasian wild boar in Ontario.**

Phasing out the possession of Eurasian wild boar and their hybrids in captivity in Ontario would be detrimental to farmers in the industry, as it would directly impact their main source of revenue.

Furthermore, it would have a negative effect on local farmers who produce the feed for our animals, as we create a market for them to sell their subpar grains. Shutting down the wild boar farming industry would have an impact on all kinds of local businesses such as Country Depot, Sausage maker, the Hardware store, Mechanic shop, etc.

The local restaurants and butcher shops would no longer be able to purchase locally grown wild boar meat, which is in high demand by customers, but would be forced to buy imported meats or from out of province if available. Our stand is that if we can produce it in Ontario, it should get produced and sold in Ontario, supporting Ontario farmers and not farmers abroad or out of province.

Our business is a major stakeholder in the Vankleek Hill and Ottawa Farmers’ markets. With our unique combination of red deer and wild boar meat, we attract hundreds of customers to the markets, who then not only spend at our booths but also purchase from other vendors at the market and local shops in the area, while they are out in the community shopping.

**OBJECTIVE 3. Use a coordinated approach to remove wild pigs from the natural environment.**

*Action 3.1 Maintain reports of wild pig sightings in a central database*

We fully support Ontario’s wild pig reporting initiative launched in 2018. By this initiative immediate remedial action can be taken if a concentration of sightings are being reported in a specific area, thus preventing the distribution of self-sustaining breeding populations early on.

**OBJECTIVE 4. Leverage expertise and resources by collaborating across ministries, with federal agencies, other jurisdictions, and industry stakeholders and partners.**

We find it very disappointing that as a major stakeholder, we have not been made aware of or been consulted regarding this draft written in April 2021, and had to find out through third parties of what is being planned.

Our position is that through proper regulations (which are already in place) and working partnerships between different stakeholders, an environmentally safe and flourishing wild boar industry can be maintained in Ontario, providing much needed economic stability and warrant the livelihoods of wild boar producers across the province.