

HCS HB 508 -- FERAL SWINE

SPONSOR: Rone

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Agriculture Policy by a vote of 14 to 1. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative Oversight by a vote of 11 to 1.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 508.

This bill removes sheep from the certain provisions of law relating to restraining and providing notice to the owner of animals running at large and clarifies that the provisions apply to domestic swine.

Currently, any person who knowingly or recklessly releases any swine to live in the wild or possesses or transports certain live wild boar without a permit from the Department of Agriculture is guilty of a class A misdemeanor. This bill changes the penalties to a class E felony.

The bill also changes the term "feral hog" to "feral swine" and specifies that any person who kills a feral swine outside without the consent of the landowner or not in compliance with certain requirements is guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

The bill also repeals the requirements for the Department of Agriculture to promulgate rules relating to fencing and health standards for certain wild boar and swine held on private property.

This bill is similar to HB 1798 (2020).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that feral swine are a threat to two of the largest industries in the state, agriculture and outdoor recreation. Feral swine cause destruction to property and crops. In the past people have released hogs either due to economic downturn or for sport. Currently, there is very little to deter a person from releasing hogs into the wild and this bill would increase the penalty, which should deter people from releasing a hog. The bill also reduces regulations by repealing provisions relating to confinement permits within the Department of Agriculture, which were rarely, if ever, used.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Rone; Missouri

Department of Conservation; Missouri Corn Growers Association; Missouri Farm Bureau; Missouri Soybean Association; Missouri Department of Agriculture; Eric Fuchs; Jeff Reed, Missouri Cattlemen's Association; Conservation Federation of Missouri; and the Missouri Pork Association.

OPPONENTS: There was written testimony submitted in opposition to the bill.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say feral hogs cause over \$1.5 billion in damage each year in the United States and can spread disease. In Germany, the feral hog population has tested positive for African Swine Flu (ASF) and although it has not spread to the domestic swine population, other countries are no longer accepting swine from Germany. If ASF were to be detected in the feral swine in Missouri, it could devastate the swine industry. Those testifying for information also stated that testing has shown that there are 14 distinct genetic feral swine populations within the state and that there has been intrastate transportation of feral swine.

Testifying on the bill were Abigale Meffert, Food Animal Protection Research Lab (FAPRL); Eleni Bickell, Missouri Science & Technology Initiative; and Travis Guerrant, United States Department of Agriculture.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.