

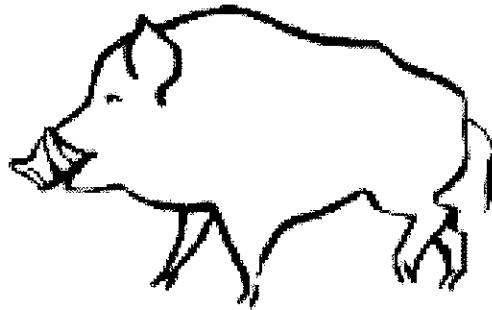
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On the issue of reproductive suppression in wild boar females and its management implication

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In some social mammals dominant alphas can suppress reproduction of other group members. This could be the response to competition for scarce resources like for food which limits reproductive output of the group. This might result in cooperative breeding systems where mostly philopatric non-breeding females help to raise the offspring of the

dominant, often related female. Although wild boar live in matrilineal groups, mechanisms of any reproductive skew had not been proved yet in published field data. A recent questionnaire of some European wild boar experts indicates also that such a mechanism might not exist in wild boar. Nevertheless, many hunters and wildlife biologists believe that dominant females suppress reproduction in yearling female group members. We found that supporters of the reproductive suppression hypothesis were located mostly in Central and Eastern Europe and assume often two different mechanisms: a) Dominant females prevent young females from oestrus or b) Dominant female prevent fertile young female from mating (e.g. by aggressive behavior towards approaching males). As this hypothesis had become a basic paradigm in hunting guidelines and regulations, the effect on current population control in Europe could be crucial. Although the importance of hunting adult female as an effective population control measure is widely accepted in wildlife management, supporters of the reproductive suppression hypothesis come to a contrary conclusion. They promote a protection of dominant females which in practice might carry the risk to decrease hunting rate of adult females. In Germany for example where a population decrease has been officially intended, hunting regulations in many states demand an increasing portion of older females in the hunting bag of 10 % – 20 %. But on the other hand 6 out of 13 federal states prescribe a hunting ban on dominant females ("Leitbachenschonung"). In fact, the portion of shot older females in the hunting bag usually does not exceed 6 %. This might be partly the result of hunting ban on dominant females. Within this presentation I will discuss the issue of the probability of reproductive suppression in wild boar.