

DAMAGE CAUSED BY WILD UNGULATES

FFH 11

Wild ungulates, which have experienced significant population growth in recent decades¹, cause damage to forest stands and agricultural plots that can be locally significant. This situation has both economic and environmental consequences: loss of biodiversity, loss of agricultural and forestry production, repetition of tillage and treatments, etc.

Damage to forests and agriculture

Between 2008 and 2015, damage was caused by wild ungulates on 21% of forest stands². According to the inventory of debarking damage in coniferous stands, the cantonments of La Roche-en-Ardenne, Bullange and Spa were the most affected in 2016³. In the agricultural sector, according to expert appraisals aimed at estimating the amount of compensation, the wild boar was the species for which the amounts were highest between 2009 and 2015⁴.

Impacts on reptile populations

Wild boar can have impacts on biodiversity (flora, entomofauna, avifauna⁵, herpetofauna, etc.) by degrading habitats, destruction or predation, competition for prey, etc. Standardised monitoring of 68 snake populations⁶ between 2000 and 2015 on 32 sites⁷ showed that the number of animals counted has decreased by an average of 14%/year in sites with overpopulations of wild boar (no decline recorded on sites with few or no wild boar). The overpopulation of wild boar probably explains the sharp decline in the common adder over the last decade⁸.

Feeding to mitigate the damage?

In order to prevent damage to agriculture, a dissuasive feeding of wild boar is organised. Under sometimes coercive conditions (daily intake, etc.) and in a context of reasonable population density (which is not the case in Wallonia¹), it can be effective for most crops with the exception of maize; it is not effective for grasslands⁹. In addition, supplementary feeding is intended to provide a substitute during periods of

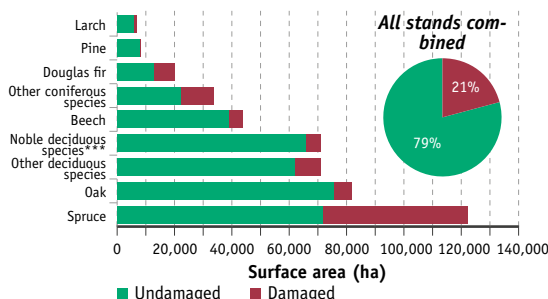
nutritional deficiency. Significant damage is sometimes observed in forests where feeding is practised, due to the concentration of animals, which also increases the risk of epizootic diseases¹⁰.

Variability of measures implemented

The Strategy to reduce populations of large game (*Stratégie de réduction des populations de grand gibier*) adopted by the Walloon Government (WG) in 2012 envisaged, as of 31/03/2015, a complete cessation of dissuasive feeding from 01/10 to 31/03¹¹. In 2015, the WG lifted the ban in cases of imminent or present damage, provided that the Nature and Forests Department was alerted¹². Another measure provided for in the Strategy concerned the dismantling of illegal fences¹³, since hunting territories cannot be fenced (except in exceptional cases for the safety of persons, crop protection and the maintenance of livestock)¹⁴. In 2016, the WG extended the exceptions to fencing installed for public safety or road safety reasons¹⁵.

[1] → FFH 10 | [2] As well as on 53% of plantations and 41% of areas under natural regeneration | [3] → Map 45 | [4] €338,000 in 2015 (30% of the total amount for damage to grasslands, 27% to maize and 21% to cereals) for an expert-appraised damaged area of 400 ha | [5] Ground-nesting birds | [6] Smooth snake, grass snake and common adder | [7] Covering most known sites in Wallonia with high snake numbers | [8] Goffart P, com. pers. 16/03/2017; Natagora, 2015 | [9] Prévot & Licoppe, 2008 | [10] The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Rhineland-Westphalia, having been affected by several episodes of swine fever at the end of the 1990s, abandoned dissuasive and supplementary feeding (although continued to practise baiting for shooting). | [11] In other words outside the period of crop sensitivity | [12] Walloon Government Decree of 17/09/2015 | [13] Fences impede ungulate movement and can increase damage. | [14] Decree of 14/07/1994 | [15] Decree of 23/06/2016

Fig. FFH 11-1 Estimate of damage* caused by wild ungulates to forest stands in Wallonia (2011**)



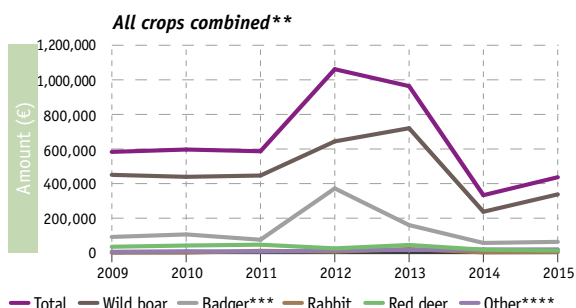
* Damage caused by debarking, browsing, abrasion and biting

** Aggregate sample of 4,752 points in productive forest areas. 2011 was the central year of the first 5 measurement campaigns (2008-2015) of the 2nd IPRFW cycle (2008-2028).

*** Noble deciduous species: ash, maple, elm, cherrywood, Northern red oak and beech/oak blend.

SOERW 2017 – Source: SPW - DG03 - DNF (IPRFW)

Fig. FFH 11-2 Compensation for damage caused by wildlife to agricultural parcels* in Wallonia



* Only damage that has been expert-assessed for compensation claims

** Cereals, maize, grasslands and other crops

*** The 2012 peak is likely to be overestimated (→ FFH 10).

**** Canada goose, beaver, fallow deer, bighorn sheep, wood pigeon and northern raccoon

SOERW 2017 – Sources: SPW - DG03 - DNF; "Fourrages mieux" non-profit association.