White Paper on the Use of a New Toxicant for the Control of Wild Hogs in South Carolina

By South Carolina Wild Hog Task Force

Wild hogs impact a wide diversity of native and anthropogenic resources within the State of South Carolina through their destructive feeding behavior, such as competition with native wildlife, property damage, transmission of diseases to humans, livestock and wildlife, destruction of native ecosystems, and impacts to the agricultural and timber industries. Specific impacts to domestic livestock include damage to pasture/range containment fences, consumption of feed and minerals, transmission of disease, polluting stock ponds/water sources, and preying on juvenile/immature domestic animals. Recent economic estimates of the wild hog damage to the agricultural and timber industries in the state alone are in the hundreds of millions of dollars annually (Rodriguez 2016).

The South Carolina Wild Hog Task Force is a partnership of state and federal government agencies, academic/research institutions and interested public-sector groups charged with identifying problems and solutions, developing and implementing legislative information strategies, and educating the public regarding the current and potential problems associated with wild hogs in South Carolina. Two of the six goals of this Task Force are to: 1) determine short- and long-term wild hog management strategies for the state; and 2) provide awareness, education, and outreach opportunities about wild hogs in South Carolina by promoting and educating landowners on new technologies in wild hog management (SCWHTF 2017).

Recently a new toxicant, Kaput® Feral Hog Bait (a modified rodenticide), has been registered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (EPA Reg. No. 72500-26) for use in wild hog control in the U.S. General directions under the current general use label (Fig. 1) state: 1) applicators must wear long sleeves, pants, and protective gloves; 2) bait may only be applied in feeders with 8-10 lb. lids; 3) feeders must be secured so they cannot be knocked over; 4) feral hogs must be conditioned to non-toxic feed for 3 to 6 weeks, after which non-toxic feed can be replaced with toxic baits; 5) all carcasses must be buried or “disposed of properly”; and 6) all non-target carcasses must be reported to State authorities.

New management tools are needed to address the increasing damages associated with wild hogs. Thus, the South Carolina Wild Hog Task Force supports the development and use of new products, including toxicants that are humane and can successfully be implemented while minimizing effects to non-target species. In supporting any new management tool, the Task Force will take into account the biological impacts a new product or management tool may have on the natural and human environments, along with potential impact(s) to non-target animals. However, currently limited information is available on Kaput® Feral Hog Bait and thus the Task Force has identified a number of concerns associated with this product, which are outlined below:

1. Research has demonstrated raccoons are capable of lifting a 20+ lb. lid on a feeder and thus raccoons and especially bears will easily be able to access feeders.
2. Squirrels, white-tailed deer, and other rodents will likely feed on bait dropped or scattered by wild hogs.
3. Primary or secondary intoxication (either lethal or sub-lethal) of predators and scavengers such as bobcats, fox, owls, hawks, and eagles is possible. There are historical cases that document warfarin poisoning in owls, peregrine falcons, and bald eagles from secondary rodenticide poisoning.
4. Concerns are high for inappropriate use of this product, especially bait dumping on the ground by users.
5. Given the susceptibility of dogs to warfarin intoxication, concern over the impacts to free-ranging pets.
6. Little to no information has been provided by EPA or Scimetrics, the producer of Kaput® Feral Hog Bait, on research pertaining to primary or secondary intoxication of non-target wildlife.
7. There would be little ability to prosecute offenders not sticking to the label requirements of pre-baiting, carcass disposal, etc.
8. The humanness of using warfarin for the lethal control of wild hogs is questionable; in Australia, warfarin has been found to be inhumane and unacceptable for use in controlling wild hogs (Lapidge et al. 2009).
9. Concern exists over the late stages of warfarin intoxication where hogs are mobile but stumbling; who would then be liable if that animal stumbles onto a highway and causes a vehicle collision or into a backyard and comes into a conflict with either people or their pets.
10. Concerns over the impacts of use in streams/riparian areas, as suggested on the label; what would the impacts be if high/flood waters carried the toxic bait or decomposing hog carcasses downstream?
11. Lastly, the use of warfarin began in the early 1950s, but within ten years rats were showing resistance to warfarin as resistant genes spread in the rat population; could not the same thing happen with wild hogs, thereby reducing the longterm efficacy of this control option.

Title 50 of SC Code of Laws considers wild hogs to be “wildlife” but not “game”, and Section 50-11-96 (A) states “It is unlawful for a person to introduce a fertility control agent or chemical substance into any wildlife without a permit from the department.” Currently SCDNR has no regulations to implement the provisions of that law.

The South Carolina Wild Hog Task Force is suggesting the following:

1. Clemson University Department of Pesticide Regulation to take into account some of the concerns listed above prior to registering the product in the State of South Carolina. This may include licensing it as a Restricted-Use Pesticide or even complete denial of the product for use in South Carolina; and
2. The Department of Natural Resources to review SC Code of Law, Section 50-11-96 and determine if the law could be used to require a permit to offer a toxicant to wild hogs, and promulgate regulations to implement and regulate the provisions of this section.
References


Fig. 1. Current approved label for Kaput® Feral Hog Bait.