**Cath Petroskey - Testimony on HB 4503 - 4507**

**From:** <earthwoman@core.com>
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**Date:** 4/14/2011 6:35 PM
**Subject:** Testimony on HB 4503 - 4507
**Attachments:** Feral swine bills.doc

Ms. Petroskey: Please enter the attached remarks into the record as our position on House Bills 4503 through HB 4507. If you prefer I send same to each of the members of the House Agriculture Committee, please advise. If any questions, contact me at 269-979-3968 Thank you. Dr. Sandra E. Nordmark, Legislative Director, MI Farmers Union

# MICHIGAN FARMERS UNION

## SUPPORTING MICHIGAN FAMILY FARMERS & RURAL ECONOMIES SINCE 1906

**APRIL 14, 2001**

**OFFICIAL STATEMENT RE H.B.s 4503 – 4507**

The Michigan Farmers Union Board of Directors voted unanimously to oppose enactment of Michigan House Bills 4503 through 4507 which address various topics keyed to feral swine.

Individually and collectively, all of these bills are without merit and pose a threat not only to the livelihoods of the state's 2,100 pork producers, but to the sustainable scientific management of Michigan's wildlife and plant resources for the public good as well.

There is a significant health risk posed to domestic swine coming in contact, either directly or indirectly, with disease-carrying feral swine. Even if feral swine originating from a confinement facility have been vaccinated, their prodigious ability to produce large, multiple litters per year results quickly, as it has already, in succeeding generations of unprotected offspring capable of carrying dangerous diseases. Furthermore, feral swine have proven to be extremely destructive to crops, native plants and wildlife, destroying the eggs and young of ground-nesting song and game birds, and act aggressively to humans and dogs if confronted. There is no cost recovery for loss of private or public property or resources imbedded in any existing or proposed legislation, largely due to the ongoing inability to identify the potentially responsible party or parties who own the feral swine now running amok, all of which have already combined to cost Michigan tax payers hundreds of thousands of dollars each year.

The interchangeability of the terms "game" and "livestock" in reference to the issue of which state agency should have administration over feral pigs has not been clarified, in that these animals are either one or the other and can not be managed as both. If they are hunted, they are game and belong under the auspices of the DNRE. If they are "livestock" then they would be regulated by the MDA and must meet the same health and animal identification requirements of domestic livestock, including financial and legal liability for damages caused. If they are not a game, ie hunted, species, then they may not be killed for profit by "shooters" willing to pay a fee for the opportunity to kill a confined animal simply for the price put on its head. Now a confirmed presence in 83% of all our counties, and suspected in many more as a result of failed confinement systems originating from so-called "sport shooting facilities", we conclude that feral swine species must be managed by the state's Department of Natural Resources & Environment as the invasive, non-native species they are and have been so declared by this state.

We find no benefit to accrue to the people of the state of Michigan, its agricultural industry, or its valuable natural resources from allowing the continuation of feral swine as a commercial enterprise based on the slaughter-for-pay operations currently in place here. It is our recommendation that not only should House Bills 4503-4507 be withdrawn from further

consideration, but that the state of Michigan immediately begin the process to enact legislation into law that bans the ownership, possession and/or commercial for-profit exploitation of feral swine. The unsportsmanlike operations that have given rise to the current situation of so-called "game farms" which allows for the accrual of financial benefit to a few, at the expense of the economic, biological and social disadvantage of the whole, does not represent the best interests of the state of Michigan and does not enhance its image elsewhere.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Sandra E. Nordmark, Legislative Director
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