



# THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

*Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation*

DATE: 7 January 2016

TO: All TWS Members in good standing

FROM: Keith Norris, Director of Government Affairs & Partnerships  
On behalf of TWS Council

RE: Draft Position Statement for Member Review – Invasive & Feral Species

Dear fellow TWS members,

The Wildlife Society's Council has approved the enclosed draft position statement for a 60-day member review and comment period. Finalized statements reflect the official position of your professional society. As such, your input into the process is a critical element to creating a robust statement, founded in scientific information and reflecting the best we have to offer as wildlife professionals.

Please review the attached document and provide your comments and suggested edits on the content, wording, and policies outlined. **All comments are due by 6 March 2016 to Caroline Murphy, Government Affairs Associate, [caroline.murphy@wildlife.org](mailto:caroline.murphy@wildlife.org).**

This statement consolidates four existing TWS position statements that discuss invasive and feral species. These existing statements are available at [www.wildlife.org/position-statements](http://www.wildlife.org/position-statements) and include:

- Feral & Free Ranging Domestic Cats
- Feral Horses & Burros
- Feral Swine
- Invasive Plants & Animals

These statements were consolidated by a Council Subcommittee to allow for a simpler, more streamlined approach to related issues and to provide a more clear expression of TWS' positions.

Thank you for lending your scientific expertise to this important process of directing the Society's policy engagement activities in support of wildlife professionals.

Sincerely,

Keith Norris, AWB®

Director of Government Affairs & Partnerships



## DRAFT POSITION STATEMENT

### Invasive and Feral Species

Invasive and feral species present unique challenges for wildlife management. The Wildlife Society defines an invasive species as an established plant or animal species that causes direct or indirect economic or environmental harm within an ecosystem, or a species that would likely cause such harm if introduced to a novel ecosystem as determined through objective, scientific risk assessment tools and analyses. Feral species are those that have been established from intentional or accidental release of domestic stock that results in a self-sustaining population(s), such as feral horses (*Equus ferus*), feral cats (*Felis catus*), or feral swine (*Sus scrofa*) in North America. Feral species are generally nonindigenous and often invasive.

Whereas invasive species are typically non-indigenous, not all non-indigenous species are perceived as invasive. For example, naturalized wildlife, such as ring-necked pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*) introduced for hunting, or species introduced as biological control agents (e.g., *Pseudoscymnus tsugae* for hemlock woolly adelgid [*Adelges tsugae*]) are typically not considered invasive as their introduction has not resulted in perceived harm to ecosystems into which they have been introduced. Similarly, some species can be invasive when introduced to areas where they did not historically occur due to barriers that prevented colonization, as is the case of moose (*Alces alces*) in boreal forests in Newfoundland.

The extent to which invasive and feral species harm indigenous species and ecosystems can be difficult to determine, and few laws and policies deal directly with their control. Many invasive and feral species are wrongly perceived as natural components of the environment and some have the support of advocacy groups who promote their continued presence in the wild. Invasive and feral species may negatively affect public trust resources, including indigenous and naturalized wildlife, which are managed by government agencies for society's benefit.

Effects of invasive and feral species on the natural world and their economic costs to society are increasing. Known effects of these species include negative impacts to biological diversity, ecosystem productivity, environmental integrity, and wildlife and human health. Impacts vary widely depending on species and ecosystems affected. Negative effects of invasive and feral species on indigenous wildlife populations occur through direct competition, predation, habitat alteration and/or degradation, disease transmission, and diversion of conservation funds for control and research efforts. Many invasive and feral species also exhibit high reproductive potential and minimal natural regulation in the ecosystems in which they become established.

Cumulative impacts of invasive and feral species can be substantial. Resources are limited in all ecosystems and introduction of invasive and feral species to systems where indigenous species are already stressed can have significant negative effects. Even after control and/or removal of invasive and feral species, recovery of ecosystems can take decades to centuries, depending on type, intensity and duration of disturbance.

The policy of The Wildlife Society regarding invasive and feral species is to:

1. Promote maintaining indigenous biological diversity and ecosystem integrity and oppose introduction or maintenance of invasive and feral species that degrade ecosystems.
2. Accept introductions of non-indigenous species that have contributed to conservation and society's appreciation for wildlife (e.g., ring-necked pheasant) or have been used as biological control agents (e.g., *Pseudoscymnus tsugae* for hemlock woolly adelgid) for species that have not demonstrated deleterious effects to native species or ecosystems.
3. Encourage programs to monitor invasive and feral species to inform future management strategies, especially those that include the key elements of early detection, rapid response, containment of spread, and eradication.
4. Encourage and support increased funding for scientific research by public and private agencies and organizations to control, minimize, or eliminate impacts of invasive and feral species.
5. Where the primary goal of eradication is not feasible, support the secondary goal of controlling spread and impact of invasive and feral species.
6. Support cost-effective control and/or eradication programs for invasive and feral species and exhibit timely results without sustaining or causing additional ecosystem harm. These control programs can, and likely will, include humane eradication of populations and should not solely rely on fertility control or other non-lethal methods, unless those methods have been shown to be effective in eliminating or regulating targeted invasive and/or feral species.
7. Encourage the enactment and enforcement of laws and regulations targeted to eradicating and controlling the spread of invasive and feral species. Examples include importation bans on non-indigenous species, and ordinances that prohibit feeding of feral animals or release of unwanted pets or domestic livestock into the wild.
8. Insist on strict control of known invasive and feral species in livestock and agricultural industries to prevent their accidental escape into the wild and consequent impacts.
9. Support establishing lead agencies within each jurisdiction specializing in individual species management where appropriate, and encourage agencies to cooperate and share technical data.
10. Encourage land and resource management agencies to place primary emphasis upon management needs of indigenous wildlife and plants and resist efforts to sustain invasive and feral species on public or private lands.

**See also The Wildlife Society's related fact sheets and statements:** feral cats; feral horses; feral swine; Standing Position on Fertility Control