

#### Introduction



#### Hypothesis:

Suppression of reproduction of juvenile group members by alpha females



Briedermann (1986): Schwarzwild

"The proportion of early maturing juveniles will increase if less mature dominante group members will be present" (p. 323)



Conclusion (drawn by Briedermann, Meynhardt, Stubbe, Happ .....):

Alpha females have to be protected even if wild boar populations should be reduced. If alphas are shot, reproductive output of young females will increase and thus reduction will be hindered.





## Consequences in management

Federal States in Germany	Protection of all by official recor	
Baden-Württemberg		
Bavaria	X	
Brandenburg		
Hesse		
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern		
Lower Saxony	X	
North Rhine-Westphalia	X > 6 out of	13 = 46 %
Rhineland-Palatinate		
Saarland	X	
Saxony		
Saxony-Anhalt	X	
Schleswig-Holstein	X	
Thuringia		

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#### Consequences in management

#### Example Bavaria: Guidelines for wild boar hunting in Bavaria

(Richtlinie für die Hege und Bejagung des Schwarzwildes in Bayern; 23.3.2004; Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Forestry)

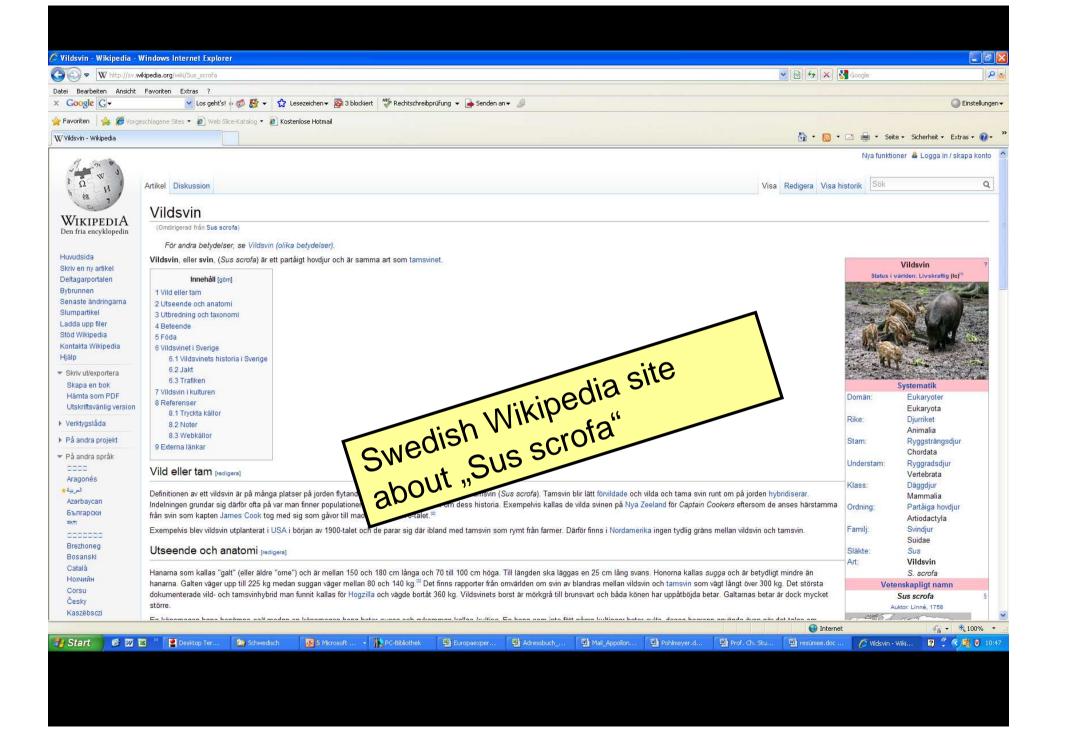
#### Guideline No. 10:

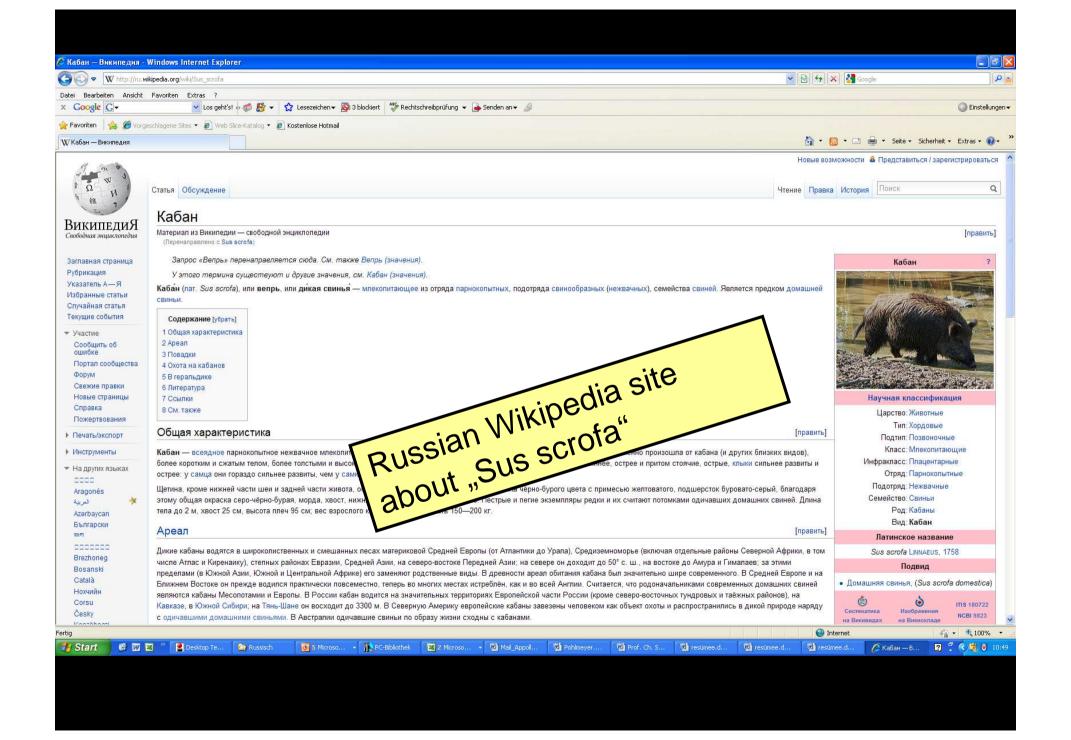
[....] increase hunting of females by increasing the proportion of hunted females in the hunting bag to at least 10 % (better even 20 %), but protect alpha females.

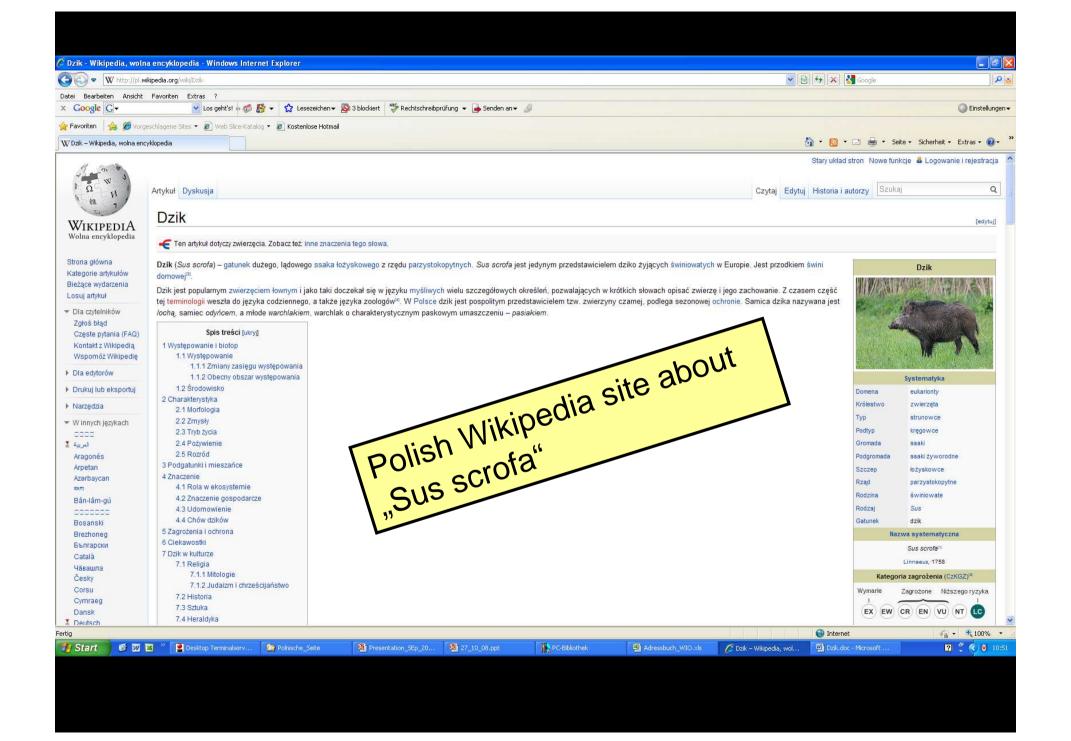
But or because of this: The proportion of hunted females in the hunting bag between 1987/1988 - 2001/2002 has not exceeded 6 %.

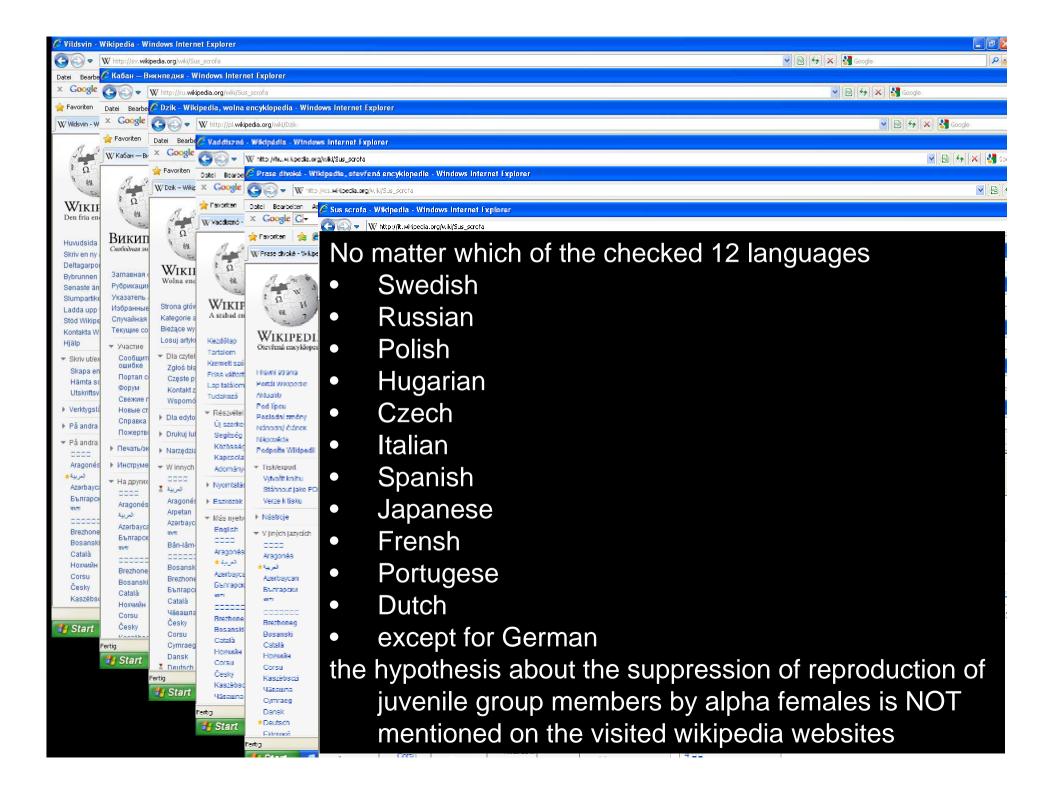
(see Metzger, J.; Holland-Moritz, H. (2002): Schwarze Zahlen beim Schwarzwild. LWFaktuell Nr. 35, page 9-13).













## Opinion of experts (2009)

Questioning by e-mail		Hypothesis that alpha female suppress reproduction by	
Name	Institution	Country	juvenile group members
Dr. Eric Baubet	1	France	not familiar
Dr. Stefano Focardi	2	Italy	not familiar
Dr. Geert Groot Bruinderin	ık 3	Netherlands	not familiar
Dr. Giovanna Massei-Smit	h 4	England	not familiar
Prof. Dr. Christian Gortáza	r 5	Spain	not familiar
Dr. Claudia Bieber	6	Austria	familiar, but dubious
Prof. A. Nahlik	7	Hungary	not familiar
<ol> <li>Office National de la Chasse et Faune Sauv</li> <li>Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Rice</li> <li>Alterra, Wageningen</li> <li>Central Science Laboratory, York</li> <li>University Castillia-La Mancha</li> <li>Reserach Institute of Wildlife Ecology, Vienr</li> <li>Faculty of Forestry, Sopron</li> </ol>	erca Ambientale		

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In some social mammals dominant alphas can suppress reproduction of other group members while competing for scarce resources.

This might result in cooperative breeding systems where mostly philopatric non-breeding females help to raise the offspring of the dominant, often related female.











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# Some criteria which might favour reproductive suppression in wild boar:

- 1. Despotism of alphas (they can eject subordinates from group or kill their offspring)
- 2. High costs of breeding for subordinates e.g. due to low body mass
- 3. Risk of inbreeding with related partner (father)
- 4. Reproduction of alphas will increase inclusive fitness of subordinates because it's a close kin (alpha = mother)
- 5. Group synchronization will suffer from a often delayed reproduction of subordinates





# Some criteria which could limit the potential of reproductive suppression in wild boar:

- 1. Periods with ressource overabundance (e.g. mast events) increases body mass of subordinates and thus lower costs of their reproduction
- 2. Short life expectancy favours early reproduction
- 3. Reproduction of subordinates as close kin will increase inclusive fitness of alphas
- 4. No incidence of cooperative breeding (helpers)





"Breed or not to breed", this is the question

After Kaminski et al. 2005 breeding or non-breeding in subadults correlates with leaving or staying in the natal group.

The probability of breeding and often leaving the group was linked with early birth date and thus good condition in autumn.

But why do early born, heavier and probably breeding subadults leave the natal group more likely?

- a) Because asychronization of breeding of adults and subadults forces group splitting or
- b) to avoid reproductive suppression of alphas.

see Kaminski, G.; S. Brandt; E. Baubet; C. Baudoin (2005): Canadian Journal of Zoology 83







Good conditioned juveniles and yearlings can breed.

This indicates a not existing or not effective (controlled) reproductive suppression of alpha females.

Does that mean that German speaking gamepeople believe in fairytales or did they simply discover a interesting mechanism of birth control in wild boar?

Did studies like the one of Kaminski et al. (2005) include in their models the covariable "presence of absence of alpha female"?





#### Conclusion

Up to now: Birthcontrol by alpha females has not been discovered.

Thus for reducing wild boar population targeting adult females is

crucial (maximum potential life time reproduction)

but or because of this

often unpopular in hunters.

Could it be that the idea of a reproductive suppression of alpha females is merely a pleasing idea for justifiying female protection?

The fact that this hypothesis seems to be known almost only in the German speaking parts of Europe indicates the character of this theory more as a cultural heritage rather than being based on any wild boar life history traits.

If yes, what are (wild boar) hunters doing in other countries? Do they protect adult females as well, but just with other justifications?





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