

According to my Webster's dictionary, a conundrum is "a riddle turning on a play in words" and that is exactly what the Minister of Natural Resources has found himself in. During the Spring flooding in 1997 the Brokenhead River went outside of its banks and approximately 100 head of wild boars escaped from a game farm South of Highway 317. Since then, in two short years, their numbers have increased to a point that has been estimated to be anywhere from three to four hundred or more, depending on who you think is right. Spring 1999 is here and the population is probably going up as you read this short article!

Here is the dilemma for the Minister and his staff. Although he really doesn't want to make a species "extinct" I am quite sure he would love to have someone assure him that the last of these roaming wild boars was no longer at large in Manitoba.

Why would you want to make a species "extinct"? The fact of the matter is that issues are already developing as a result of the growing boar population:

Habitat degradation and destruction is occurring. (The Libau Bog has been declared to be an Ecologically Sensitive Area!)

Wild boar encounters with people are adding a new dimension to the already present black bear population. (The nudist camp in the area expressed public concern for their visitors as they hiked in the woods!)

Collisions with vehicles have already taken place. (As if the deer and moose in the area don't already pose enough of a challenge for night driving!)

Now for the real dilemma of how you go about trying to intentionally accomplish the objective of eliminating these animals down to the very last one. After all we have been told about a species being so vulnerable to the effects of man it should be a straightforward and direct process. The picture becomes complex when you consider the big picture and keep in mind that there can't be any collateral damage to other species, the costs must be realistic and the observant public can't be offended.

The reality is that this situation is already out of hand and the likelihood of completely eliminating these animals is slim at best.

What is the solution? Just like the rest of our natural resources this population needs to be carefully managed. The difference is that these animals need to be managed in a proactive and aggressive manner to initially reduce their numbers and then keep them from rebounding to current levels.

Better yet, perhaps we could turn back the clock and consider the potential problems that come with the introduction of a non-indigenous species such as this and prevent the problem before it happens.