

## FACT SHEET - WOLF REINTRODUCTION IN THE UNITED STATES

By T. R. Mader, Research Director



Dog killed by a wolf. Note: Dog is still on its chain.  
Northern Minnesota has documented wolves coming into towns to kill dogs.

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After their success at forcing wolf recovery in Yellowstone National Park, special interest groups are proposing the reintroduction of wolves in various regions of the United States (U.S.). Based on extensive research, we oppose transplanting wolves in the U.S. for the following reasons:

**1. Wolves are not biologically in danger of extinction and should be removed from the Endangered Species Act (ESA).** There are 1,500 to 2,000 wolves in Minnesota, 6,000 to 10,000 in Alaska and 40,000 to 50,000 wolves in Canada, according to the biologists. They are certainly not in danger of extinction.

The ESA has two provisions for listing a species as "endangered." One is a species in danger of actual extinction, and two, a species can be placed on the Act if it has lost a considerable amount of its former territory.

The wolf is listed "endangered" for the second reason since it inhabited most of the U.S. However, wolves have not ever been in danger of biological extinction.

ESA protection of the wolf will assist in land lock-up as advocated by special interest groups. Certain groups favor large areas of land to be designated as wilderness which eliminates virtually all multiple use of land. There is organized opposition to hunting and trapping. Wolf recovery could be used to further these agendas.

Note: The penalty for killing an endangered wolf, even in the protection of ones' livelihood, is \$100,000 and a mandatory prison sentence.

**2. Wolf recovery will be very costly, and a constant on-going expense for federal and state governments as well as placing hardship on individuals who live near recovery areas.** In Yellowstone, cost estimates on wolf recovery are from \$200,000 to 1 million per wolf. Furthermore, little, if any, actual benefit is gained from wolves being in the region. For example:

**A. Very few people will see a wolf.** Wolves are very shy, elusive and nocturnal by nature. Yellowstone Park officials have praised the numerous sightings. However, in relation to total numbers of visitors to Yellowstone in 1996, less than .005 ever saw a wolf in 1996. If wolves become accustomed to humans, then they are a danger just as mountain lions have become throughout the West. Even Yellowstone's records document several coyote attacks on humans. Similar incidences have been reported in other parts of North America.

**B. Wolves will reduce the numbers of animals observed by people.** Wolves are hunters. They hunt 365 days a year and need 5 to 10 pounds of meat per day to survive. Therefore, to maintain a healthy wolf population, wolves would have to kill a significant number of wild animals for survival. Thus, there would be fewer animals seen by wildlife viewers.

Additionally, fewer animals will be observed due to the wariness of the animals. Just as elk or deer become vigilant during hunting season, so will the wild animals of the regions where wolves roam. One significant difference will be that hunting season for wolves is year-round and therefore the animals will be significantly more wary and seen less by people. Algonquin Provincial Park in Canada is a good example - deer are seldom seen.

**C. Reduction of harvestable game.** In other words, wolves will have a negative impact on hunting. Often recovery programs are implemented in National Parks where hunting is not allowed. However, the wild game herds migrate out to areas where people can hunt them. Wolves will reduce these animal numbers. Wayne Brewster, a National Park Service Biologist, told guides and outfitters, who lived north of Yellowstone National Park, to expect a fifty percent (50%) reduction in harvestable game when wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park.

Wolf predation and harvest by man (hunting) are not compatible. Studies have shown that prey populations cannot withstand hunting by man and uncontrolled wolf predation. If wolves recover in an area where hunting is allowed, hunting would most likely be stopped or limited significantly for the benefit of wolf recovery. Studies on wolf recovery have estimated that hunting could be reduced by 50% in certain cases.

Hunting has a significant positive impact on the economies of the western states. It is a valuable wildlife management tool. Hunting can be used very effectively to control wildlife populations while contributing substantial amounts of money for wildlife habitat improvement and wildlife studies.

Wolf predation contributes no monies to states' economies, habitat improvement or wildlife

studies. Wolf predation causes management costs to rise dramatically while offering no positive economic gain in return.

**D. Balance of nature will not be restored.** Many claim the wolf is "the missing link" in the ecosystem. What's not being said is that wolves would create a whole new set of problems in the course of nature and wildlife management. Studies in Minnesota, Alaska, and Canada prove this conclusively.

**E. Wolves will kill livestock.** Our research indicates there is more history on wolves and their destruction of livestock than any other predator. A good book, still available through Inter-Library Loan, is THE WOLVES OF NORTH AMERICA, by U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologists Stanley Young and Arther Goldman.

From the time of the colonists, wolves have killed livestock. One of the first wolf bounty laws was passed in Boston in 1630. It wasn't until the 1930s that wolves were significantly reduced in number to prevent livestock depredation in the U.S.

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Here's how wolves impact hunting so severely. Wolves are opportunists, meaning they kill whatever is convenient. This may be an old or sick animal, a pregnant female (wolves are particularly hard on females heavy with young - they kill many of them), but most significantly they prey on the young due to the ease of catching and killing them.

We have interviews with several wolf biologists in Canada. Wolf biologist John Elliot (British Columbia Ministry of Environment) took the time to explain the impacts of wolf predation on a herd of wild game, whether it be moose, caribou, elk or deer.

In this particular example, he used a number of 300 females in a herd of elk. In his region, wolf predation is often 90% on the young (100% mortality rates due to predation are common in the north). If 300 females gave birth in an area of wolves, the approximate loss would be about 270 young calves killed during the summer months, leaving 30 yearlings to serve as replacements. A regular die-off rate on such a herd is about 10%. So the 30 yearlings would balance out the regular mortality rate of the female segment of the herd.

But overall there is a decline in the elk herd due to the fact the 30 yearlings are usually sexually split in half (15 females and 15 males), thus the reproductive segment of the herd declines although the numbers appear to balance out. Without some form of wolf control, the rate of decline will increase within a few years.

There were approximately 100 males in this herd of elk. Figuring the regular mortality rate and compensating with the surviving young leaves 5 animals which may be harvested by man (harvest of males only).

Now if this herd of elk were in an area of no wolves, there would be approximately 60 - 70% successful reproduction (calves making it to yearlings) or 200 young. Half of those surviving

young would be male (100 animals). After figuring a 10% mortality rate, 90 older animals could be harvested without impact to the overall herd numbers. In fact, the herd would increase due to additional numbers of the reproductive segment (females) of the herd.

Dr. Charles E. Kay, Ph.D. illustrates the impacts of wolf predation on hunting in a comparison of moose populations in British Columbia to that of Sweden and Finland. Both areas have a comparable amount of moose habitat.

Dr. Kay stated:

"During the 1980s in Sweden and Finland, the pre-calf or the wintering population of moose was approximately 400,000 animals and was increasing. While in British Columbia, it was 240,000 animals and decreasing.

"In British Columbia where they have a population of 240,000 animals and after a calving season, they killed only 12,000 animals which is a 5% off take. In Sweden and Finland, on the other hand, they have 400,000 moose and guess how many they killed in the fall? They killed 240,000 moose in the fall which is a 57% off take rate.

"Now the two main differences, I don't want to imply that there's not vegetation differences and other things, but the two main differences is that British Columbia has somewhere between 5,000 and 6,000 wolves, all sorts of bears, grizzly bears and black bears, which are also important predators, and mountain lions. Sweden and Finland have none of the above."

The 2 maps included with this fact sheet further illustrate these impacts caused by wolves.

Data from:  
 Alaska Game Regulations, No. 29  
 Effective Dates: 7/1/88 - 6/30/89

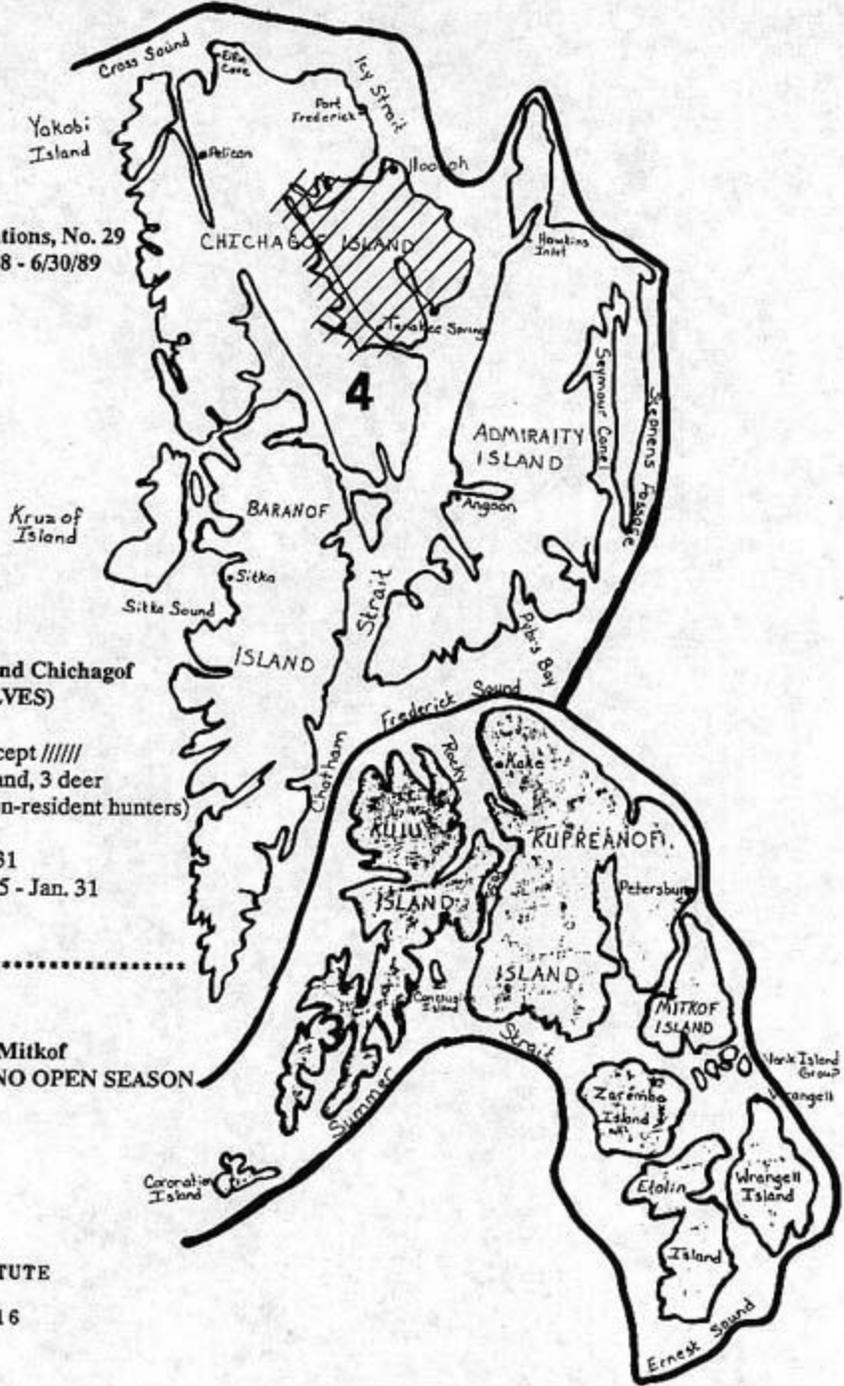
Admiralty, Baranof and Chichagof  
 Islands (NO WOLVES)

Deer bag limit - 6 (except // area on Chichagof Island, 3 deer limit - resident and non-resident hunters)

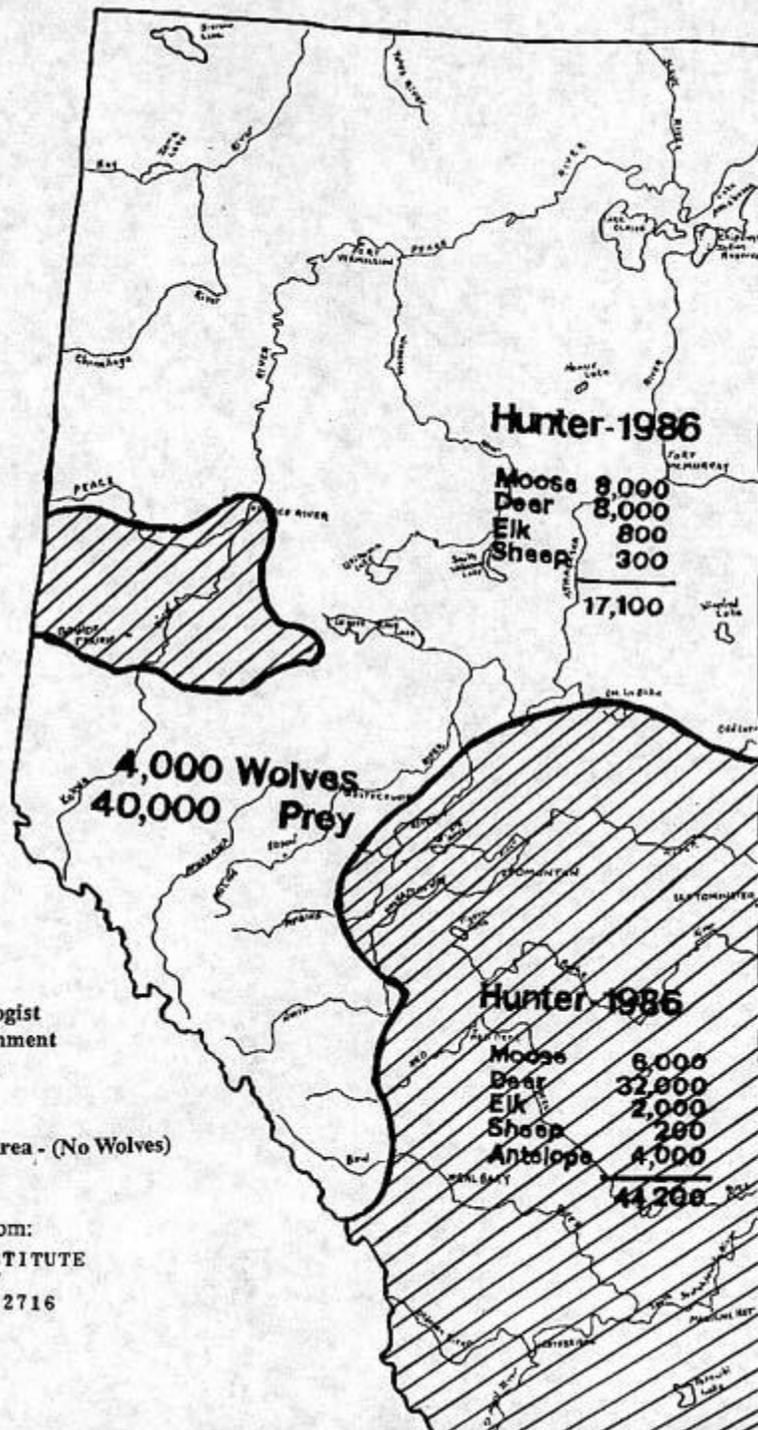
Season - Aug. 1 - Jan. 31  
 Any deer from Sept. 15 - Jan. 31

Kuiu, Kupreanof and Mitkof  
 Islands (WOLVES) - NO OPEN SEASON

This information from:  
 COMMON MAN INSTITUTE  
 12665 Hwy 59 N  
 Gillette, WY 82716



**PROVINCE  
OF  
ALBERTA**



Data from:  
John Gunson, Biologist  
Ministry of Environment  
Edmonton, Alberta

//// = Populated Area - (No Wolves)

This information from:  
COMMON MAN INSTITUTE  
12665 Hwy 59 N  
Gillette, WY 82716

Let's address another important issue concerning wolf recovery - compensation to ranchers for livestock killed by wolves. Defenders of Wildlife have established a \$100,000 compensation program to reimburse Wyoming, Idaho and Montana ranchers (Yellowstone Wolf Recovery) and New Mexico and Arizona ranchers (Mexican Wolf Recovery) for losses caused by wolves. This program is often referred to as the answer to ranchers' concerns about livestock loss to wolves.

In reality, the program is nothing more than a publicity tool for Defenders. It is totally inadequate for addressing the problem of livestock loss to wolves. Here's why:

First, the animal killed has to be "confirmed" as a wolf kill. Confirming a wolf kill can be done by examining the carcass noting areas attacked, bite marks, possible tracks, etc. However, this is difficult due to certain natural processes.

**1. Carcass not found - totally eaten.** Wolves are opportunists, meaning they kill whatever is easiest. Wolves are well known to kill the young, both of wild animals and domestic stock. If a young calf or lamb is killed by a wolf, most, if not all, of the animal is eaten so that you simply cannot find the carcass.

**2. Scavengers and decay, especially in hot weather, rapidly eliminate evidence confirming cause of death.** Scavengers -- coyotes, eagles, fox, skunks, crows, ravens, magpies, gulls -- are often waiting to feed on the carcass before the wolves leave. Consequently, there is no confirmation.

**3. Terrain - heavy vegetation, such as timber and undergrowth hide the carcass.** There are thousands of acres of heavy timber in the United States. A carcass can be easily overlooked.

So Defenders can't lose too much. Animal Damage Control Officers tell us confirmed kills are often 10% or less of what a predator actually kills, meaning that up to 90% of the livestock lost to wolves will never be compensated under this program or any program similar to it.

The compensation program is also short term. Defenders have specified the program will be in effect until the wolf is removed from the Endangered Species List. That means when there are significant numbers of wolves to merit their removal from the ESA, Defenders' program will cease. One would assume when wolves are in significant numbers in various regions of the U.S. to merit removal from the ESA, there would be more loss of livestock to wolves than with a few turned loose in a recovery area.

We wouldn't want to give you the impression that Defenders instituted a program in which they knew they could not lose unless that is what they had planned. Hank Fischer, Representative for Defenders of Wildlife, stated: "**The purpose of a compensation program isn't to make ranchers happy or gain their support,... The purpose of the program is to develop enough of a political and economic comfort level with the public so as to allow wolf recovery to proceed unimpeded.**" It has worked very well for them.

Another aspect of compensation should also be addressed. How does one compensate a person for the emotional loss felt when a beloved pet or family animal is killed by wolves? This question was driven home to us when an elderly woman called our office and related the following personal account:

In the early 1900s, her family homesteaded in east central Wyoming. She and her sister were the only children. There was a country school four miles away. Each day the children rode bareback

on the family horse to school. The horse was pastured near the school during the day and then the children rode the horse home.

One winter morning, the horse failed to come in. The father and the two sisters went to investigate and found, by examining the tracks left in the snow, that two wolves had passed through the area in the night and attacked the horse. The wolves were able to rip open the abdominal cavity of the horse, causing the intestines to fall out on the ground. Thus, they found the horse, still alive, standing on its own intestines. The horse had to be killed.

Just how does one compensate those children for their loss?

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Finally, two important points:

**1. It's questionable how much actual benefit wolf recovery is for wolves.** We do know wolf recovery benefits the people who make money off the animal. These are the special interest groups, biologists and researchers who study and promote the animal -- often at great taxpayer expense. Further, there are those who use endangered species as a surrogate for personal agendas such as anti-hunting and land control. There's also a conflict of interest involved: **"Those who write recovery plans for wolves and other endangered species, choose the alternatives, conduct and edit the science, edit the comments and make all the decisions, are the same ones who benefit directly from their own contrived determinations."**

**2. Wildlife management is an art science, not a specific science.** A specific science is something that is specific and can be tested, tested and re-tested with the same results every time. Chemistry is an example. A chemist can mix one element with another element and get a certain and definite reaction every time. That is specific. Wildlife management is an art science in that there are so many variables that two biologists can look at the same studies and come up with different conclusions. Quite often wolf biologists do not agree with each other in their studies about wolves.

This is the very reason for the need to review history. History helps biology and wildlife management become realistic.

For more information, contact:

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