

Seattle Times, by Craig Welch

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As wolves return, so do tensions with ranchers

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By **Craig Welch**

Seattle Times staff reporter

When the cougar trackers finally figured out it wasn't a **big cat** that was wiping out Dave Dashiell's livestock, the wolves already were on their way to killing or wounding 33 sheep.

By then even dogs, traps and specialists armed with lights, paintball guns and rubber bullets couldn't keep the wolves and livestock apart.

"There were days when I walked down a drainage and when I came back two hours later there was a dead lamb where I walked," Dashiell's tearful wife, Julie, told a state wildlife panel last weekend.

And by the time a government aerial hunter aboard a helicopter unintentionally shot and killed a breeding female wolf amid the cedar, grand fir and thick underbrush of Dashiell's Stevens County grazing land, the outrage had reached almost everyone.

Less than a decade after the state's first wolf pack in 70 years returned to Eastern Washington's timbered mountains and dry-grass lowlands, tempers have returned to a boil. But with the state's wolf packs now numbering 15 and wolf populations growing 38 percent in six years, these conflicts, in some ways, are the price of success.

For the last six weeks, it seems, no side has been happy. Ranchers are furious that the state backed off in September without killing more of

northeast Washington's Huckleberry wolf pack. Conservationists are furious that the lone wolf killed after conflicts with livestock was the one government officials implied they would not target.

Tens of thousand of emails flooded the state, most opposed to killing wolves at all. One county adopted a resolution proclaiming its citizens free to [kill the predators](#) themselves. Another county declared a state of emergency.

Trappers just this weekend started trying to catch or dart a wolf so habituated to people she's aggravating rural residents and playing with nearby sheep dogs. A legislator told wildlife officials that ranchers were getting death threats. One reported his cows being shot.

The tensions highlight a reality that wolf experts have known Washington would face eventually: The chief barrier to the return of healthy populations of *Canis lupus* is rarely habitat or disease, but maintaining a healthy degree of social tolerance.

"Yes, wolves are recovering, and their population is increasing and naturally dispersing," said Nate Pamplin, who oversees the wolf program for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "We'll do everything we can to minimize conflicts. But it will be necessary at times for the department to lethally remove wolves."

Yet with a wildlife issue that touches hearts and pocketbooks, and salts festering wounds left by decades of land-use battles, details matter.

While wolf recovery enjoys overwhelming [support](#) in Washington, how well recovery will proceed in coming years depends in part on how all sides navigate these budding skirmishes.

Because nobody thinks they are going away.

Trouble on the rise

Aside from the Methow Valley cattle rancher who killed a wolf and tried to mail its pelt to Canada in a [bloody FedEx](#) box in 2008, Washington wolf recovery had, for the most part, been relatively smooth. Until two years ago.

In 2012, wildlife officials killed seven wolves in northeast Washington after several were caught killing cattle owned by a rancher very public about his disdain for wolves.

After a quiet grazing season in 2013, the conflicts blew in like a tornado again this summer.

When some of the sheep Dave and Julie Dashiell turned out on their private allotment on Hancock Timber land in June went missing, they attributed it at first to the cost of doing business. When more died, they thought they had a hungry cougar, but experts determined the culprit was canine.

Then the Dashiells' losses mounted through August, and state teams sent to haze the wolves weren't effective. The state contracted with a federal government hunter to shoot up to four younger wolves. But the terrain is so thick, dense and steep, and the helicopter had only a brief window to work, so the hunter killed a single wolf, which turned out to be the pack's breeding female.

"It was less than ideal for us to learn that," Pamplin said. But the state pointed to studies suggesting packs in Alaska often stay [together](#) even when a different female assumes mating duties.

With Labor Day coming and grouse season starting up, state officials decided hunting or trapping had to end.

The Dashiells moved their sheep to new rangeland, which proved difficult to find, and discovered several hundred sheep were missing. The losses may have nothing to do with wolves, but for many the link was clear.

“My husband and I came from nothing,” a clearly shaken Julie Dashiell said last weekend. “We came from nothing to watch it all go down the drain in a matter of minutes. Our losses probably total over \$100,000.”

While the move and the lone wolf-kill appeared to halt livestock deaths for the moment, Eastern Washington ranchers were livid the state didn’t keep reducing the pack.

“If we’re going to have livestock and wolves on the environment, something is going to die,” Stevens County Commissioner Wes McCart told the commission that oversees WDFW. “And right now it seems like that’s a one-way street.”

Len McIrvin, who lost two cows on different rangeland and was the cattleman who lost the livestock in 2012, was more blunt: “Our ancestors knew what had to happen — you get poison and you kill the wolves,” he said.

McIrvin said he’s been harassed by wolf lovers. A Ferry County sheriff’s deputy confirmed last week that a cow was shot on McIrvin’s land. But he pointed out that the cow was butchered, which made it more likely an act of someone stealing meat rather than a political protest.

As the tensions deepened during the last two months, environmentalists held a conference call with the governor, and the Dashiells’ summer conflict quickly become the center of a major dispute that has simmered since 2012:

When, precisely, should the state start killing wolves? How much did this rancher — and should others — do proactively to avoid potential conflict?

And who decides, before the wolf-killing starts, whether or not ranchers' efforts have been enough?

Wildlife officials maintain these issues are largely settled, with some steps outlined in the state's wolf recovery plan.

And the Dashiells certainly had taken steps to avoid wolf-livestock conflicts. They helpfully put off grazing until late June, after deer and moose have given birth, which offers wolves an alternate source of food. Dashiell and his wife ran sheep using guard dogs, which can deter predators.

And he moved quickly when necessary to remove carcasses of dead livestock so they wouldn't attract more wolves.

Dashiell, however, didn't enter into a cooperative agreement with the state to take proactive measures, such as using range riders, which the department would help pay for.

Before wolves are killed, "we need a referee in real time that people trust who could judge whether a rancher has shown due diligence," said Mitch Friedman of Conservation Northwest.

Calls to Dashiell's cellphone were returned by Jamie Henneman, a spokeswoman for Stevens County's local ranching group. Henneman said ranchers already are doing everything they could possibly do.

"The rancher is running a private business," she said. "He needs to have the latitude to run his business any way he thinks is best."

Finding what works

While the state's wolf population still hovers in the low 50s, a dozen of the 15 packs are located in northeast Washington, with conflicts mostly stemming from just two — the Huckleberry and Profanity packs.

So some ranchers there are trying to be pragmatic.

For the last several years, John and Melva Dawson and their son Jeff, outside Colville, have used money from outside groups to hire their daughter to work as a professional range rider.

“The wolves are here to stay — haven’t got a choice about that,” said John Dawson. “We can’t just go out like a wild man and start shooting them all. So I’m trying to do whatever I can to just stay in business.”

His daughter puts in up to 12 hours a day for five months, circling the cattle, preventing contact by wolves. And when a wolf with a radio collar is near, she tracks the animal on her laptop and goes out with her four-wheeler to drive it away.

“Sometimes they just circle around and get out of sight,” Dawson said. “But we’re putting the message to them that they don’t want to eat here.”

The Dawsons haven’t lost a cow to a wolf in years, and if they did, some environmentalists say they would react without suspicion.

“If a pack started eating Dawson’s cattle, I’d say, kill those buggers,” Friedman, the environmentalist, said. “We know sometimes wolves have to go. The debate occurs when ranchers are being less than diligent or when pro-wolf people suspect anti-wolf people are manipulating them.”

No one believes range riders are the solution to every wolf conflict. The terrain in Eastern Washington is often too rough and brushy. And managing sheep can be more complex than running cattle.

But state officials said they know this corner of the state hasn’t seen its last conflict. State officials are hosting a meeting in Colville on Tuesday to talk with ranchers and others about wolves — and to encourage more people to consider precautionary steps.

“I remain very concerned about this pack coming into the next grazing season,” Pamplin, with WDFW, said of Huckleberry. “We’re going to work very hard with this rancher and others to figure out what preventive measures can be deployed. Are there other things that can be considered?”

But if conflicts resurface, some wolves again may have to go, he said, “but not at a level that hinders recovery in Washington.”

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This article is posted on the following PBS website: <http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/233/wolves-ranchers.html>

Interview: A Rancher's View

A fourth generation rancher, Martin Davis runs cattle with his dad and brother on their ranch in Paradise Valley, Montana. In 1997 he was one of the first ranchers to encounter wolves outside of Yellowstone National Park. This is an edited transcript of Davis's conversation with David Brancaccio.



BRANCACCIO: What do you think of wolves?

DAVIS: Wolves and livestock don't mix. That's the reason they were eradicated back when. It's nice to say that maybe they will learn to coexist. And that can happen for a day or two, or a year, whatever. Wolves mean dead livestock. And that means out of our pocket when you have dead livestock.

BRANCACCIO: What do you do when you see that there's a pack of wolves getting too close to your property?

DAVIS: Human presence is what we've found out works real well ... Back before the wolves, we checked on the cows maybe once a week. Now we feel like we have to check on them at least every other day. And that's just to make sure nothing has been killed or that the wolves are bothering them, and pushing them through the fences. And it's a fairly long trip. It takes about a half a day to check on the cattle and come back down.

BRANCACCIO: How did you feel when you first saw wolves on your property?

DAVIS: It made me angry because this is our property ... We don't need to have a predator that's trying to kill our livestock, the way we make a living. And you can't do anything about that.

We had some college kids that came by to ask questions about wolves and ranching. And one of the questions I asked them was if any of them owned any kind of store. And the one girl says "Yes. My dad owns a hardware store." It was back on the East Coast somewhere. "Well, it would be just like your dad having to leave the backdoor open at night and saying, 'I hope the thieves don't steal too much tonight.'"

"We don't need to have a predator that's trying to kill our livestock, the way we make a living."

BRANCACCIO: Is it tempting to shoot them?

DAVIS: Well, it is. I know that other people say, "Well, if I would have seen them, I'd shot them." But that's not the answer either I don't think and especially when they are an endangered species. The repercussions of that could be very bad.

BRANCACCIO: The efforts to bring the wolf back seem to be working pretty well. Has that changed your view of the wolf?

DAVIS: Well, I don't know that my views have changed on the wolves in particular ... What it does mean is they [the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service] aren't quite as strict on the rules now. There has been a rule change that if wolves are actually chasing your livestock, you are able to take [kill] a wolf now. And I think that's only right especially on private property. But even off of private property, if they're chasing your livestock, you should be able to stop them from doing that.

[Since 1995, ranchers are permitted to shoot wolves but only when they were caught attacking livestock. In 2005, under a new ruling, ranchers in Montana and Idaho are now able to shoot wolves they witness harassing their cattle before the wolves actually attack.]

BRANCACCIO: Are we getting to a place where you think there's a way that if the wolves just stay off your property that you could coexist?

DAVIS: I don't think just because they're off of my property doesn't mean that it's good because we've got neighbors. But I do feel that with the new rule of being able to take a wolf now and again is going to train the rest of the pack that this isn't a good place to be.

"You see that little old calf that's ripped from tail to his ears and the mama's standing over there bawling for him."

BRANCACCIO: Is it hard when you find that your livestock has been killed because of one of these wolves?

DAVIS: It definitely tests your patience for sure ... You see that little old calf that's ripped from tail to his ears and the mama's standing over there bawling for him. One of those calves that we spent cabin time bringing into this world and making sure it got inoculations on time, and taken care of.

BRANCACCIO: Now any good ranch business plan probably has some other ways of increasing the income. What have you tried here?

DAVIS: My brother and I started an outfitting service. We're 30 years into that job right now. And we take elk hunters in the fall. We have found out that that has changed drastically now the wolves are here. Our native herd of elk that we hunt are virtually non existent. Or, when they do come through, they come through fast. We used to book 15 to 20 hunters a year and now we have trouble booking anyone.

BRANCACCIO: It's my understanding there was a time when the environmental community did not have a whole lot of respect for ranchers. Do you think that has changed?

DAVIS: Yes, it really has. About ten years ago we were considered by a lot of the environmental community as the bad guy ... Now they've kind of switched around because what they're saying is, well, when the rancher is there, so is open space. When the rancher is forced to leave, that's when the subdivisions and the condos and that kind of stuff shows up. So I'm starting to hear, "Well now I like wolves, but I like ranchers too. Now how can we keep both together."

This article is posted on the following website:

<http://www.northernag.net/AGNews/AGNewsStories/TabId/657/ArtMID/2927/ArticleID/1219/CategoryID/2/CategoryName/General%20News/MT-Wool-Growers-Submit-Input-on-Wolf-Hunt.aspx>

Northern AG.net

MT Wool Growers Submit Input on Wolf Hunt

Wednesday, June 22, 2011/Categories: [General News](#)

The following is from the Montana Wool Growers Association:

On Monday, the Montana Wool Growers Association, which represents Montana's sheep producers, submitted its written comments on Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' (FWP) proposed 2011 Wolf hunting season. The proposed public comment period on the 2011 wolf hunting season closed the same day. The FWP Commission will hold a meeting in Helena in July to adopt the fall wolf hunting plan.

In its comments, the Wool Growers Association requested that the FWP Commission increase the proposed wolf harvest number above the 220 harvest proposed. The Wool Growers noted that even if the full amount of 220 wolves were killed by hunters this fall, FWP's documents show that there would still be around 425 wolves remaining in the State at the start of 2012. The Wool Growers noted that 400 wolves is far beyond the 130 wolves called for in Montana's wolf management plan and requested that the Department set a more aggressive wolf kill take number.

In addition to calling on the FWP Commission to increase the numbers of wolves harvested, the Association also asked that the number of wolves to be harvested in Southwest Montana be increased. As justification for increasing the number of wolves killed in the Big Hole, the Bitterroot, and in the Tobacco Root Mountain and Gravelly/Snowcrest areas of Madison and Beaverhead County, the Association noted that these areas have traditionally had the highest number of livestock-wolf interactions and wolf depredations. The Association called for FWP to target wolves in these areas for harvesting to prevent further losses to livestock producers living in those areas and to protect big game populations located there. The Wool Growers also requested that the Department allow wolf trapping to continue during the wolf hunting season, and to take proactive steps to encourage hunters to avoid killing collared wolves – a step the Association said would help save the State of Montana money by ensuring that FWP would not have to collar the same wolf packs a second or third time.

Stakeholder Activity

Stakeholder Group: Ranchers



For the stakeholder meeting, your group will represent Ranchers. Your job is to put yourself in the Rancher's boots and think about how wolf conservation affects them. To help you get started, we've put together some materials about Ranchers for you, which you will find in your **Rancher Stakeholder Folder** available for free download on the Bear Trust website (<http://beartrust.org/gray-wolves-in-the-northern-rockies>).

To ensure you have a solid understanding of the Rancher perspective relative to wolf conservation, you may need to do some additional research.

During the stakeholder meeting, there will be three goals:

- 1) Understand the different perspectives of each stakeholder**
- 2) Determine "common ground" among stakeholders**
- 3) Work together to identify issues and possible solutions, and provide input on how we can collaboratively move forward to ensure all stakeholder perspectives/goals are considered in our wolf conservation efforts**

To help with Goal # 1, each of the 6 stakeholder groups will give a 3-5 minute presentation about its stakeholder group at the beginning of the stakeholder meeting. You can use powerpoint, prezzi, or some other presentation format for your presentation. Feel free to use photos provided at the end of these instructions in your presentation.

For your 3-5 minute group presentation, make sure to include AT LEAST the following:

A. Describe the Rancher perspective as it relates to wolf conservation. How do wolves affect some ranchers?

Here's a few papers and articles that will help you get started. Read the following ARTICLES:

- ARTICLE: "Who Is Paying for Wolves?"
Include some of the photos and quotes from this document in your presentation
- ARTICLE: "MT Wool Growers submit input on wolf hunt"
According to this document, does the MT Wool Growers want more or fewer wolves?
- ARTICLE: "Weighing in on Wolves"
What does this document state about how wolves affect rancher's livelihood?
- ARTICLE: "Interview with a Rancher"
What does this rancher say about wolves and livestock?

Include the analogy about the "hardware store" in your presentation.
- ARTICLE: As Wolves Return, So Do Tensions with Ranchers"
What happened to Julie Dashiell?

B. In your presentation, include a copy of Figure 1 from your "Student Pages_QUESTIONS about Excel Data" and state whether Ranchers would like MORE wolves or FEWER wolves.

C. In your presentation, include a copy of Figure 3 from your "Student Pages_QUESTIONS about Excel Data" and demonstrate how the number of cattle and sheep killed by wolves decreased after relatively higher numbers of wolves were removed for management control. Make sure your class understands that from a Rancher's perspective, it's important to keep wolf numbers in balance to help minimize livestock kills from wolves.

D. Go online and learn a little about organizations that represent ranchers, like the Oregon Cattleman's Association:

<http://orcattle.com/2010/07/23/wolves-in-oregon/> and Montana Wool Growers Association. Include the mission statements for these organizations in your presentation

E. Learn about livestock losses and how much money has been provided to ranchers due to livestock depredations, and include information about this topic in your presentation http://liv.mt.gov/LLB/lossdata_2015.mcp

Question: Were all payments that were made to livestock owners to pay for wolf depredations?

After you have put together your presentation, think about the issues that affect your stakeholder. After all groups have given their presentations, you will be working to identify common ground and then you will be discussing ISSUES. Be prepared to state one or more issues that affect your stakeholder during the Stakeholder Meeting.

PHOTO SECTION

Feel free to use these photos in your presentation
Photo images provided courtesy of Shutterstock













Written by Dr. Melissa Reynolds-Hogland.
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WEIGHING IN ON WOLVES

Montana works to strike a fair and biologically sound balance between having enough of the large carnivores and having too many. BY TOM DICKSON

▶ **D**RIVING THROUGH THE FROZEN landscape of Yellowstone National Park's (YNP) Lamar Valley one recent morning, wolf watching guide Nathan Varley slows down and points to several ravens about a mile off. "There it is," he says, pulling over to set up his spotting scope and train it on a recent elk kill, which a few minutes earlier a colleague had told him was in the vicinity. For an hour we watch two wolves feeding on the carcass, a large gray male known to local watchers as "Crooked Ear" and a smaller black female called "Spitfire." The naming fosters anthropomorphizing, admits Varley, but it helps with identification, as do numbers given to about 20 percent of the park's wolves that wear radio collars for research purposes. Several other wolf watchers gather along the road in the bitter cold to view the large carnivores, clearly visible through high-powered optics. Crowded tour buses and minivans operated by wildlife-viewing companies pass by every 15 minutes or so, returning to Gardiner from another elk kill farther up the valley.

Varley, who lives in Gardiner, studied the park's carnivores for several years while earning a doctorate in ecology. But his primary concern with wolves these days is economic, not academic. "Every park wolf that steps over the border into Montana and Wyoming and gets shot is money out of our pocket," says the wildlife guide, who is also vice president of a local group called Bear Creek Council that tries

SAME ANIMAL, DIFFERENT LENSES Many hunters see the wolf as competition for elk and deer. Ranchers consider the large carnivore a threat to livestock. Yet others, like wolf watchers who crowd Yellowstone National Park in winter, when viewing conditions are best (right), consider the large carnivore a natural wonder to be cherished and protected.



to increase tolerance for wolves and bison leaving the park. Varley and his wife run Yellowstone Wolf Tracker wildlife tours, one of a dozen or so guiding operations sanctioned by park officials. These kinds of services are at the heart of a thriving wolf watching tourism that a University of Montana study found pumps millions of dollars into counties surrounding the park each year.

That economic argument is just one used by wolf advocates critical of growing hunter and trapper wolf harvests in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. Some are like Varley, who has no gripe with wolf hunting elsewhere but wants a kill-free buffer around Yellowstone. Others, often from outside the Rocky Mountain West, want to halt all lethal action on an animal that was classified as federally endangered just a few years ago.

On the flip side are those who demand that Montana kill more wolves, which they say harm ranchers' bottom line and deplete elk and deer herds. "We'd like the state to take much more aggressive measures in certain areas to bring these predator numbers down to a more tolerable ratio with prey populations," says Rob Arnaud, president of the Montana Outfitters and Guides Association. "We've got hunting outfitters around Yellowstone going out of business because of wolves."

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is listening to all sides. The department's job is to ensure there are enough wolves to maintain a healthy

Tom Dickson is editor of Montana Outdoors.

"Every park wolf that steps over the border into Montana and Wyoming and gets shot is money out of our pocket."

"We've got hunting outfitters around Yellowstone going out of business because of wolves."

population in Montana, as mandated by its mission and federal law. At the same time, it works to limit livestock depredation, maintain abundant deer and elk, and foster public tolerance for wolves.

It's a balancing act, and, with impassioned interests tugging every which way, not an easy one.

► **Frustration fuels anger**

The wolf has long represented conflicting views of untamed nature. Roman, Norse, and Celtic mythology celebrated wolves, yet the carnivores were feared and persecuted throughout Europe for centuries. Native American tribes revered wolves as guides to the spirit world. The United States nearly eradicated the carnivore with bounties and, later, wide-scale federal government extermination. In Montana alone, "wolfers" killed 100,000 wolves between the 1860s and 1920s, primarily with poison.

Public attitudes toward wolves began to change in the 1970s as part of the growing environmental movement. *Canis lupus*, nearly extinct in the Lower 48, became a symbol of the nation's vanishing wildness. In 1995-96, 66 wolves were live-trapped in Canada and set free in Yellowstone National Park and the wilderness of central Idaho. The goal: Restore wolves to a region where they had almost been eliminated. Western states objected but took some comfort knowing that management authority, which includes regulated hunting and trapping, would revert back to them once the wolf population reached federal recovery goals.

In the first decade after the Yellowstone introduction, the highly prolific carnivores grew rapidly in number and range. By 2001 the regionwide population count surpassed the federal goal of 300 in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming combined (at least 100 in each of the three states). By 2007 it reached at least 1,500—five times the initial target. Yet as wolf advocates cheered the growth, stockgrowers were reporting more and more livestock losses. Hunters in some areas began seeing fewer deer and elk and attributed the disappearance to growing wolf numbers. With the large carnivores still under federal protection, wolf critics felt powerless to stem the rapid population growth. They grew increasingly vocal, holding rallies, proposing legislation to defy federal rule, and even threatening illegal actions. "Shoot, Shovel, and Shut Up," read one popular bumper sticker.

Anti-wolf furor lessened after 2011, when the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) removed ("delisted") the Northern Rockies population from the federally threatened and endangered species list. Wolves could now be hunted under carefully regulated conditions. Still, many wolf opponents complained that too many wolves remained in areas where hunters were unable to reduce numbers. Demands grew for the state to kill pups in dens or, as Alaska and Idaho do, employ aerial gunning from helicopters.

FED UP Frustrated that wolf numbers continued to grow far beyond initial federal recovery goals, anti-wolf protesters turned up the volume during the early 2000s. Wolves were finally delisted in 2011.



THE FACTS regarding concerns over Montana's wolf management

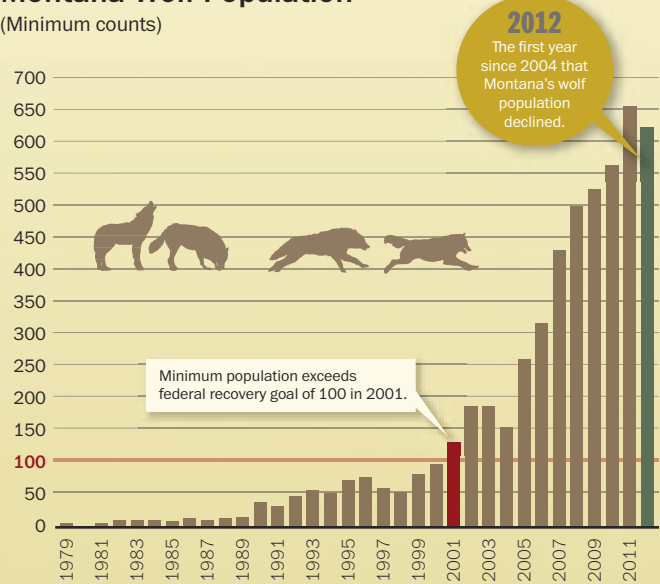


► **PRO-WOLF BELIEF:**

"Regulated hunting and trapping is decimating Montana's wolf population."

6X **FACT:** Montana's wolf population is still six times greater than the initial federal recovery goal of 100—a threshold reached in 2001.

Montana Wolf Population
(Minimum counts)

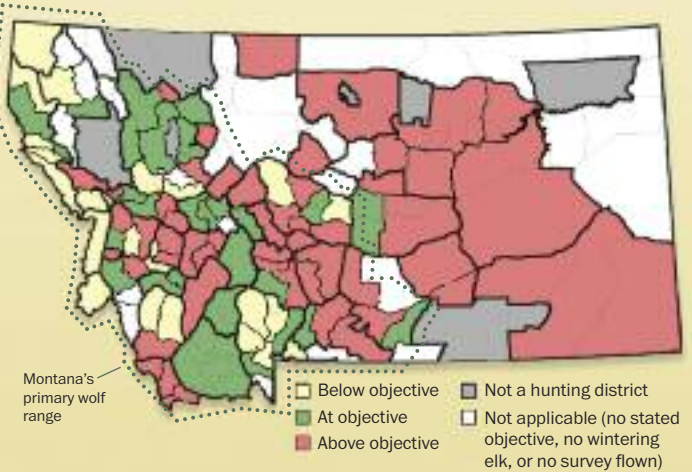


► **ANTI-WOLF BELIEF:**

"Wolves are decimating Montana's elk population."

81% **FACT:** Elk numbers are still at or over population objectives in 81% of hunting districts statewide. Numbers remain strong across most of the state's primary wolf range.

2013 Elk Population Objective Status by Hunting District



GRAPHICS: MONTANA OUTDOORS; SOURCE: FWP

Such radical proposals alarmed wolf advocates. With the species no longer under federal protection but instead subject to state control, they responded by ramping up their rhetoric and protests, just as wolf critics had a few years before. Public comments to FWP skyrocketed, from 500 on the first proposed wolf hunting season to more than 25,000 on the most recent. Most were coordinated e-mail “blasts” coming from outside Montana that denounced all wolf hunting.

► **Outrage over killings**

Much of the outcry from wolf advocates concerns the Yellowstone park wolves. Extensive coverage by the BBC, *National Geographic*, *The New York Times*, and other global media have detailed the carnivores’ complex social interactions since reintroduction. Fans throughout the world track the Junction Butte, Blacktail, and other packs on blog posts and Facebook pages maintained by watchers who cruise the park’s roads year round. Devotees can see where Tall Gray was spotted last week or learn how 686F is faring in Mollie’s Pack, as though the wolves were characters in a reality TV show. Little wonder the Internet lit up this past August after a collared YNP wolf (820F) that had become habituated to humans was killed in Gardiner. “People become attached to these wolves that then leave the park and are shot. They get outraged,” says Varley.

Yellowstone’s wolf population has declined in recent years, not due to outside-the-park hunting, as some suggest, but mainly from a shrinking elk population. (All hunting is banned within the borders of national parks.) In the late 1980s and early ’90s, the northern Yellowstone elk herd was one of the nation’s largest. Reintroduced to this prey-rich environment, wolves grew from 41 in 1997 to a peak of 174 in 2003. As park biologists predicted, once elk numbers dropped (due to predation, weather, and



5% Today just over five percent of the 1,600 or more wolves in the Northern Rockies reside in Yellowstone.

6 Montana’s wolf hunting season now lasts six months. Hunters and trappers may (though rarely do) take up to five wolves each.

liberal elk hunting seasons outside the park) so did the wolf population, which now numbers 86. Hunters have legally killed wolves that wander out of Yellowstone, but far more of the animals have died from wolf-on-wolf attacks, starvation, and disease. Mange alone has killed dozens.

Though the park’s wolf decline understandably concerns watchers and guides, “the Yellowstone introduction was not designed to create wolf viewing opportunities or businesses,” says Ken McDonald, head of the FWP Wildlife Division. “It was meant as the

base for expansion far beyond the park’s perimeter. Park visitors focus on individual animals, but here in Montana our responsibility is to manage wolves at a population level.”

Wolf numbers in Montana and elsewhere in the Northern Rockies are robust, making the park’s packs less significant to the regional population than their popularity would indicate, says McDonald. Today just over 5 percent of the 1,600-plus wolves in the Northern Rockies reside in Yellowstone. The species is thriving across the West and Midwest, despite recent claims by the Sierra Club that hunting “has driven the gray wolf nearly to extinction.” According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Lower 48’s wolf population has grown by 50 percent over the past decade to 5,360.

Outlandish claims show up on both sides of the issue. Some wolf critics still insist the carnivores are “wiping out” most of western Montana’s elk populations. True, numbers are considerably down in some areas that have especially high wolf densities, notably the upper Gallatin, Blackfoot Valley, and Gardiner areas. But elk numbers remain at or above “population objectives” (what the habitat base and landowners will tolerate) in 81 percent of the state’s hunting districts.

► **Addressing reasonable concerns**

Exaggerations aside, most apprehension over wolves is well within reason: A Dillon rancher needs to protect his sheep; a Missoula hunter wants to see elk next November; a Bozeman naturalist desires to live in a state with a healthy wolf population; a Florida tourist hopes her favorite Yellowstone wolf stays free from harm. “We take all reasonable concerns about wolves seriously,” says Jeff Hagener, FWP director.

The department notes that livestock losses declined last year thanks to higher hunting and trapping harvest. Also credited are ranchers working with the department’s six wolf specialists to protect sheep and cattle using fence flagging (fladry), carcass

removal, and other measures.

Following reports of wolf predation on the southern Bitterroot Valley’s elk herd, the department launched a large-scale investigation in 2011. Researchers recently found that mountain lions are more responsible for elk population declines there than wolves are. What’s more, the southern Bitterroot elk herd is rebounding, likely thanks to favorable weather and habitat conditions.

As for criticism that Montana hasn’t done enough to control wolf numbers, “FWP fought for years to restore state management authority that includes public hunting and trapping,” says Hagener. Because wolves are wary and difficult to hunt or trap, FWP has supported liberalized regulations that now include a six-month season, electronic calls, and a wolf limit of five (a number that very few hunters or trappers actually take).

Montana is working to pare down the population of 600-plus wolves living here. But the state will not drive numbers low enough to trigger federal re-listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). “We can keep the ESA at bay only if we continue to show we have adequate regulatory mechanisms in place and are not advocating wholesale wolf slaughter,” says McDonald.

In support of wolves, Montana’s wolf conservation plan—the document that

“As hard as it might be for some people to believe, allowing Montanans to hunt wolves actually builds tolerance for wolves”

guides its wolf management—recognizes that many people value wolves, the large carnivores play an important ecological role, and the population must remain genetically connected to those in other states and Canada if it is to survive over time. FWP opposes poison, aerial gunning, and proposed legislation classifying wolves as predators that can be shot on sight. The department has created special hunting zones around YNP and Glacier National Park that reduce the chances that a park research wolf will be killed, and it urges hunters not to shoot radio-collared wolves.

FWP has also committed to keeping the population well above what the USFWS originally deemed sufficient for recovery.

Despite protests from wolf advocates, Montana will continue to allow hunters and trappers to kill wolves. That was part of the recovery agreement. Paradoxically, it’s also

in the wolf’s best long-term interests.

“As hard as it might be for some people to believe, allowing Montanans to hunt wolves actually builds tolerance for wolves,” says Hagener. He points out that overall anti-wolf anger in Montana, though still strong in some circles, has eased considerably since hunting and trapping seasons began in 2011. “As long as we can manage wolf numbers at what most Montanans consider an acceptable level, people here will accept having a certain amount of wolves on the landscape along with some loss of livestock and prey animals.”

But without regulated harvest, Hagener says, “there’d be much more pressure to treat wolves like varmints that could be shot anytime, year round.” Such relentless mortality would drive down Montana’s overall wolf population. And it would prevent Yellowstone wolves from moving freely across the region to breed with counterparts in Idaho and northern Montana, threatening that population’s genetic health and future survival.

Most people, including Montanans, want wolves to exist in the Northern Rockies. But how many, and where? It should come as no surprise that what is considered “enough” differs widely between those trying to live their lives on a landscape where wolves live, too, and those watching the drama play out from hundreds of miles away. 🐺

EATING OR STEALING? There’s no argument that wolves kill prey animals and livestock to survive. Where tempers flare is over how much, if any, of that predation is reasonable.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JAMIE & LISA JOHNSON; BLUEOUPHOTO.COM; WIKIPEDIA; ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY; PUBLIC DOMAIN; PUBLIC DOMAIN

HISTORICAL PERCEPTIONS OF WOLVES



In Roman mythology, the twins Romulus and Remus, raised by a she-wolf, found the city of Rome.



For centuries Europeans feared wolves. “Wolves Chasing Sleigh” was a popular subject for painters.



President T.R. Roosevelt declared the wolf a “beast of waste and destruction” as the U.S. embarked on systematic eradication.



In fables and cartoons, the Big, Bad Wolf uses cunning and deceit to trick Little Red Riding Hood, the Three Little Pigs, and other innocents.



Modern fans embrace the wolf as intelligent, sensitive beings restored to their rightful place.



Who is paying for the wolves?

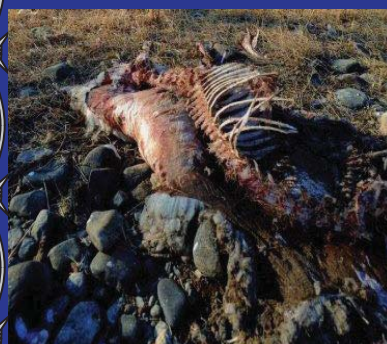
this message is from Montana ranchers



Bauer Ranch, Phillipsburg
7 confirmed wolf kills
18 missing
60 open animals
25 lbs.+ weight loss
3 year cost \$88,500



Baker Land & Cattle, Hot Springs
This calf and 3 others were
confirmed wolf kills last summer
12 animals missing- 40 dry cows
50 lbs. per calf weight loss
Total cost \$25,000 +



Martin Ranch, Two Dot
3 separate kill dates
22 confirmed wolf kills
30+ unconfirmed kills
\$500 vet bills, 66 open ewes
3 year total \$28,000



Cumin Ranch, Big Timber
4 confirmed wolf kills



Kertulla Ranch, Avon
3 confirmed wolf kills
34 missing calves
2 ranch dogs
Since 1995 lost \$30,000 +



Herman Ranch, Niarada
7 confirmed wolf kills
20 missing calves
60 aborted 1st calf heifers
50 lbs. lost weight
\$50,000



Boomer Ranch, Drummond
11 confirmed wolf kills
(2 steers, 9 sheep)
25+ missing lambs
Total cost 2008-2009 \$40,000



Hansen Livestock, Dillon
38 confirmed wolf kills
35 sheep, 2 calves, 1 yearling steer
20 head of sheep wounded and 1
yearling steer.
1 guard dog seriously injured

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Dear Readers:

Here are some photographs that ranchers have submitted for this ad which are verified wolf kills. These are not pretty by any means; however, they need to be shown. Many times the carnage is not visually recorded as we do not always have cameras with us when wolf kills are discovered. Ranchers have paid dearly for the reintroduction of wolves, both financially and emotionally, as you can see from these photos submitted by ranchers throughout Montana. Ranchers were never in favor of reintroducing the wolf on our public lands. We feared the wolf reintroduction plan would not only be detrimental to livestock and pets, but we were certain other wildlife populations would be seriously affected as well. That fear has proven to be well-founded. Our ranches are home to moose, elk, deer, bear, coyotes and a host of smaller animals. Montana ranchers pride themselves on preserving the natural habitat of these wildlife populations and enjoy seeing them as they roam across our lands. However, the reintroduced gray wolf has viciously decimated Montana's wildlife numbers. Young animals are no match for a stealthy wolf!

The facts of wolf reintroduction: The original recovery goal for wolves in the northern Rocky Mountain region consisting of Montana, Idaho and Wyoming was for a total population of 300 wolves and 30 breeding pair. That goal was attained in 2002 and has been exceeded every year since. At the end of 2007 there were approximately 1500 wolves and at the end of 2008 the estimate was 1645 wolves and 95 breeding pairs. This is more than five times the number of wolves called for in the reintroduction plan! A total of 102 wolf deaths were documented in 2007; 73 were related to livestock depredations, seven were killed illegally, and six were struck by vehicles or trains. Others died from a variety of causes common to all wildlife species, including poor health and old age. Fish, Wildlife, & Parks documented a minimum of 163 pups at the end of 2007. In 2008 there were 155 deaths with a minimum of 147 pups. Despite the death loss of these wolves, the wolf population is still very secure, is well above the recovery criteria, and continues to increase by a minimum of 18% every year. It is clear the northern Rocky Mountain's gray wolf population has exceeded all recovery goals.

The out-of-control explosion of wolf population growth has been devastating to wildlife and livestock as hungry wolves compete for food. For livestock producers, so far the confirmed death loss in 2008-2009 has been 130 head of cattle, 183 sheep, 13 goats, 2 guard dogs, 2 horses, and 8 llamas. These numbers may not seem alarming until you take into consideration that for every confirmed kill there are three or four more that are not confirmed for various reasons. Unfortunately, producers are only reimbursed 1/8 of the actual loss value. Ranchers support the delisting of the gray wolf so they may be managed properly to maintain an eco-friendly existence with other wildlife species and livestock.

"The Sieben Ranch at Wolf Creek has used guard dogs and herders for over 10 years as non-lethal deterrents to predators. Five guard dogs fighting against four wolves did not stop the savage killing of Duke. The wolves were not deterred by the guard dogs nor the presence of the herder. Statistics recorded by Wildlife Services and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks show a continued increase in the population of wolves throughout Montana. Consequently, there has also been increased predation by wolves on livestock and domestic pets. The presence of wolves also causes a very substantial monetary loss to livestock producers. Livestock stressed by the presence and harassment of wolves have a lower conception rate, abort their pregnancy, and show reduced weight gain. Wolves can be a part of the eco system but should not be allowed to destroy Montana. Since their reintroduction they have not only had a very serious affect upon livestock throughout western Montana, but they have had a very devastating affect on Montana's wildlife. If the wolf population is not controlled, not only will Montana's livestock producers lose, but Montana's wildlife will be decimated." John & Nina Baucus, Sieben Ranch, Wolf Creek

"Our family has been ranching in Montana for over 140 years. Never before have we seen such savagery to defenseless animals as we have seen since the reintroduction of the gray wolf. To kill, a wolf will grab hold of the animal and hang on until there is enough blood hemorrhage underneath the skin that they die. We have also had a calf that they ate the hind end while he was still alive. We brought the pair home, but the calf died from its wounds and the mother died from stress. We realize that wolves are here to stay, but we need to be able to protect our property, our family, our pets and our livelihood. We would like to be able to say 20 years from now that we are on the 6th generation of ranchers in our family, but wolves can put any rancher out of business." McGowan Ranch, Drummond

"On the Helle Ranch of Dillon we raise both cattle & sheep and have done so for many years. We began to see losses shortly after wolves were released in 1996. We have seen many opportunistic killings by wolves. Many times they will kill an animal and not eat it. We have seen an increase of wildlife on our home pastures during the winter months due to the predation of their populations. This we feel is a very fair trade off as we share their mountain pastures in the summer. The use of our ranges have been severely reduced due to the wolves; it is very hard to manage our summer pastures and continue to be good stewards when our animals are chased from these areas. They, like everything else, just want to be safe. Ranchers do contribute greatly to the circle of industry and life in a very important manner. What it takes for us to supply our product to consumers is open spaces, clean air, water, sunshine and lots of hard work. Dealing with the wolves just makes it that much harder and more discouraging." John Helle, Helle Ranch, Dillon

"The Bauer Ranch in Phillipsburg was a pretty, peaceful place up until three years ago. It was home to content cows, deer, elk and other wildlife. That all ended when the wolves moved in. They have killed our livestock and wildlife in close proximity to our ranch headquarters. The picture of the wolf shown above was taken without a telephoto lens! These animals have gotten so bold they have absolutely no respect for humans. There is no place on our ranch that is safe anymore. As the wolves increase in numbers, we have also seen a steady increase in the loss of our calves and the decrease in our cow conception rate due to stress. We wish for the return of the peaceful days we once had!" - Robin Bauer, Bauer Ranch, Phillipsburg

"This spring at the Herman Ranch we had 7 confirmed kills on the calving ground and 60 first calf heifers aborted due to the stress from harassment of the wolves. So this spring alone the ranch has lost \$50,000.00 worth of cattle. And this is before we put our cattle out to summer pasture! I'm not looking forward to counting the losses when we bring them home this fall. The Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board has paid us on the 7 confirmed kills, but we have a bigger loss on the unconfirmed cattle for which we are not being reimbursed. With the hits we are taking from the reintroduced wolf, how do we pay our bills? And who is going to bail out the ranchers from these losses when it was our own government that reintroduced the wolf in our backyards?" - John Herman, Herman Ranch, Niarada

"We raise both cattle and sheep. During the past year we have witnessed more "joy" killing by wolves - animals that were alive with their guts hanging out or torn up so bad in the hind quarters they had to be euthanized. We've lost two yearling steers weighing over 600 pounds. We've lost several ewes and over 25 lambs. These brutal attacks have brought lots of tears. I had to look at my ewes that had their guts torn out and lying on the ground still alive and tell them there was nothing I could do. We live only 100 yards off Highway 1. These attacks occurred within 1/4 mile of our house. We have elk on our property, and the wolves passed right through them to come down and kill our livestock; so NO, wolves don't just prey on wild game." - Leslie Boomer, Boomer Ranch, Drummond

"Wolves have attacked our sheep in Sweet Grass County, killing three and maiming one so badly that we had to put her down the following day. Wolf recovery people would like you to believe that wolves only prey on the old, weak, and crippled animals. These ewes were all under 3 years of age, their most productive, healthiest years. We as producers find it very discouraging and disheartening to be forced to euthanize our own livestock, all for a wolf recovery program that we didn't want nor seem to have any control over. Lambing is a family effort that takes hard work, long hours, and good management. We are working even harder since the attacks. Ultimately, all of this work will make NO difference when the wolves 'find' the sheep again! We also understand that there were so many livestock deaths to wolves last year that the recovery program has no more money to compensate the hard-working producer." - Tye, Rosi, Austin, and Ceder Cumin, Sweet Grass County

"We've lost 4 times more livestock in two years with wolves than we have in 10 years with coyotes, bears, fox and lions. Predators such as coyotes and bears consume their kills; the wolves have yet to eat what has been killed on our ranch. "I have run guard dogs for 13 years and they have been 95% effective towards predators. When the wolves came in 2007, my guard dogs came home and wouldn't leave our yard. (I know why now looking at the photos). I want people to understand that wolves change everything, from killing our stock to extreme changes in your animals behavior. I feel our tax dollars are going DIRECTLY towards the destruction of our own livestock with the wolf reintroduction program." Tonya Martin, Martin Ranch, Two Dot

"Hansen Livestock is a family owned, fourth-generation sheep and cattle ranch. We have been using all non-lethal methods available in an attempt to keep the wolves away from our sheep. Lately, due to the growing wolf population, they seem to be more aggressive. The wolf kills started in the spring of 2004 and are increasing every year as the wolf population grows. In many cases it seems the wolf just kills for the fun of it. We run cows and calves on forest and BLM lands during the summer months and we always come up few head short every fall. Unless something is done to control the wolf population, they will continue to increase at an alarming rate. It will be hard for the Montana rancher to stay in business because of the wolf predation on livestock and the resulting financial burden. Wildlife have also changed their habits to try and survive wolf attacks. Instead of living in their natural habitat elk, deer, and other herbivores are congregating in large numbers for protection, thus impacting private property of land owners. At this rate the wolf harvest of wildlife will result in the near total elimination of the animals we have all learned to admire." Paul Hansen, Hansen Livestock, Dillon

"There are many more ranchers across the state that are suffering losses and hardship due to the uncontrolled population of wolves. What you see is only a fraction of the devastation. The ranchers do feel empathy for the wolves, "they are just another one of nature's creatures." But they need to be managed in a way that is safe for their population, other wildlife, and our own. If you would like to help, please support the delisting. If you would like to make a contribution, please contact the Montana Cattlemen - they need funds to help compensate ranchers." Jim & Kim Baker, Baker Land & Cattle, Hot Springs



Sieben Ranch, Wolf Creek
4 confirmed wolf kills
2 dogs



King Ranch, Lonepine
1 confirmed wolf kill
2 missing, 2 dry cows
Left summer range 2 weeks early
\$4,500 +



Blacktail Mountain Ranch, Kila
2 confirmed kills
2 dry cows
25 lbs. weight loss
Total \$5000



Helle Ranch, Dillon
24 confirmed wolf kills
250 missing
4 guard dogs and 2 stock dogs killed
\$1000+ vet bills
Range that is not utilized due to wolves
\$120,000 since 1996



McGowan Ranch, Drummond
6 confirmed wolf kills
100 missing calves
45 lbs. per calf weight loss
\$150,000 in the last 3 years



Svenson Ranch, Reed Point
31 confirmed wolf kills,
13 missing ewes & lambs
100+ head dry ewes
\$78,000 +



PLEASE SUPPORT
DELISTING!

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Montana Wool Growers Assn.
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King Ranch
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