

**Response Guidelines**  
**For**  
**Reported Gray Wolf Activity**  
**In Washington State**

Coordinating Agencies:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
USDA/APHIS – Wildlife Services

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## PURPOSE

These response guidelines are a cooperative effort between the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services (WS). The purpose of the guidelines is to prepare for a coordinated and effective response to possible situations that may occur if wolf/human interactions take place in Washington State. **This is not a wolf management plan or recovery plan.** It does not contain any objectives for establishing wolves in Washington State. The guidelines adhere to federal and, where appropriate, state law and policy and emphasize close interagency and inter-governmental coordination and a common understanding of specific roles and responsibilities between all involved agencies.

## LEGAL STATUS

### Federal

1. As of August 2010, the gray wolf is listed as endangered throughout Washington under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). The eastern third of Washington is included in the federal Northern Rocky Mountain Distinct Population Segment (NRM DPS). This means that, while WDFW and USFWS are co-managers, the USFWS has overall lead responsibility for wild wolves in Washington while they are federally listed. Wild wolves in Washington are fully protected by the ESA, which is administered and enforced by the USFWS. Wolf-dog hybrids have no federal or state legal status.

For species listed under the federal ESA, activities that may result in “take” of endangered species are generally prohibited. The definition of take under the ESA includes to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or attempt to engage in any such conduct.

Wildlife Services (WS) is the federal agency with nationwide responsibility for managing wildlife damage problems and investigates possible wolf depredation on livestock and/or other domesticated animals and implements control actions under the direction of the USFWS to address conflicts.

### State

2. The gray wolf is also listed as endangered by the State of Washington and receives protection under state law (WAC 232.12.014, RCW 77.15.120). The State may designate agents or enter into cooperative agreements with Federal agencies to enforce State law. The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission may also promulgate rules to authorize Federal and State agencies concerned with the management of fish and wildlife resources to lethally remove wolves under limited circumstances.

The WDFW currently has a cooperative agreement with the USFWS, under Section 6 of the federal ESA, that provides WDFW authority to manage for the conservation of endangered or threatened species, including gray wolves, within the state, except for lethal take of those species.

The WDFW is in the process of developing a Wolf Conservation and Management Plan for the state.

### Tribal

3. Tribal governments manage wildlife on their reserved lands and they maintain certain rights to wildlife resources on ceded lands in the state.

## **OVERVIEW OF POTENTIAL SITUATIONS**

Discussed below are five situations that might arise in Washington and an overview of the recommended response strategy for each situation. The five situations are:

1. **Unconfirmed report of wolf activity or sightings.**
2. **Verified wolf activity, without a problem incident.**
3. **Report of possible wolf-caused livestock depredation.**
4. **Report of a wolf capture.**
5. **Report of an injured or dead wolf.**

Specific incidents will have unique circumstances and responses are likely to vary from case to case to account for individual situations. The cooperating agencies will coordinate their responses to the various wolf management situations as they arise. If wolf activity is discovered within or adjacent to tribal lands, government-to-government discussions with the affected Tribe will be initiated.

### **1. Unconfirmed Reports of Wolf Activity (Tracks or Sightings)**

USFWS, WDFW and other agencies occasionally receive reports from people who have observed either large tracks or large animals that they think may be wolves. The response procedure is to interview the caller and fill out the observation form that documents details on the observation and where it was located. This information will be stored for future reference.

### **2. Verified Wolf Activity (Without a Depredation or Conflict)**

- Wolf activity in Washington will be considered verified when a State, Federal or Tribal wildlife biologist has been able to see and, to the extent possible, conclusively identify a wild wolf in the field. If current, highly credible reports are received from another source, or if multiple credible reports are received from the same area, appropriate personnel may be sent out to the area to verify it. If there is uncertainty about the identification, wolf experts may be brought in to assist in the confirmation process.
- If wild wolves are confirmed to be present and the animal(s) has not been implicated in a livestock depredation or other problem incident, USFWS, WS and WDFW will collaborate to monitor the wolf activity to the best of their ability, given available resources. Tribal wildlife agencies may also participate in monitoring activities. In addition, a WDFW local enforcement officer will

coordinate with livestock producers in the local area to provide relevant information and what steps they may legally take to prevent depredation.

- The preferred monitoring approach is to capture and radio-collar wolves to facilitate regular tracking of movements. However, this can be difficult to accomplish with a lone wolf that is roaming across wide areas. Available funding and personnel may limit the ability to pursue this approach. Coordinating agencies would likely wait until there are multiple observations of wolf activity in an area – indicating the presence of one or more resident animals – before considering a concerted effort to capture and collar a wolf. A potential alternative approach would be to do periodic surveillance from the ground and air to document tracks and any observed wolf activity.
- The purpose of monitoring wolf activity, once verified, is to determine what areas wolves are using. Also, by knowing where the wolves are located, the agencies may be able to anticipate problem situations and utilize non-lethal techniques to prevent or reduce conflicts. If problem situations do occur, the presence of radio-collared animals will increase the efficiency of subsequent actions.
- Both confirmed and unconfirmed reports of wolf sightings should be mapped, and reports stored by the agency wolf point of contact in their respective offices.

### **3. Report of Possible Wolf-Caused Depredation on Livestock or Other Domestic Animals**

WS is the lead Federal agency for animal damage control and, when authorized by USFWS, will implement wolf control actions in Washington. When a report is received claiming that a wolf has attacked livestock (for example, cattle, sheep, horses, mules, and livestock herding or guarding animals such as dogs, llamas, and donkeys) or other domestic animals, agency response will include the following elements:

- WS investigates. Keys to a successful response include:
  - WS personnel are rapidly notified and respond promptly and determine whether or not it is a wolf depredation.
  - There is prompt coordination with the affected livestock producer to secure the scene.
  - Key individuals in USFWS and WDFW are promptly notified, including USFWS Office of Law Enforcement and WDFW Enforcement.
  - There is coordination between USFWS, WDFW, WS, and landowner to plan possible follow-up actions.
- If the WS investigation determines that the depredation was wolf-caused, a response action will be initiated. Site-specific circumstances will dictate what type of response action will be used.

### **4. Report of a Wolf Capture**

Wolves may be caught in traps or snares set for other animals. If a captured wolf is healthy, the responding agency will consult with partner agencies prior to initiating an action. Site-specific circumstances will influence how such captures are handled; however, a rapid response and decision will be necessary to ensure the health and well being of the animal. USFWS Office of Law Enforcement should immediately be consulted in this situation (to make a legal determination about the capture, properly document the event, and initiate further action if necessary).

Factors that will be considered when responding to a wolf capture include the following:

- If there is no history of wolf problems in the area where the animal is captured, the preferred approach is on-site release. However, decisions regarding how to manage the issue will be made on a case-by-case basis. An evaluation will be made to determine if there have been any reported wolf problems in the area prior to making a release decision. Interagency coordination will be initiated to determine what should be done with the animal.
- If an on-site release is being considered, an evaluation of the animal's health will be conducted prior to release. If the wolf is injured, depending on the severity of the injury, a decision will be made on whether or not to release the animal. Female wolves with pups captured on public lands prior to October 1 should be released in the same area as capture unless there have been repeated depredations in the area.
- If the animal is collared and released, collaborating agencies will monitor its movements as regularly as possible.
- If a decision is made to hold the animal, arrangements will be made with an appropriate kennel facility and veterinary care will be arranged, if needed.

## **5. Report of a Dead or Injured Wolf**

USFWS Office of Law Enforcement and WDFW enforcement personnel will immediately be called in to investigate all reports of dead or injured wolves and make a determination about the cause of death or injury, properly document the event, and initiate further action as necessary. The USFWS is responsible for investigating cases that involve unauthorized take of a Federally listed species. The WDFW is responsible for investigating violations of State wildlife laws.

When an injured or dead wolf is found, response will include the following elements:

- USFWS and WDFW Law Enforcement will be immediately notified and they will determine and control all subsequent aspects of the response.
- Keys to a successful response include:
  - Law Enforcement officers are rapidly notified and respond promptly.
  - Scene where the animal was found is left undisturbed and effectively secured.
  - Key individuals in various agencies are promptly notified.
- If an injured wolf is found, actions will be taken immediately to stabilize its condition. Interagency coordination will be initiated to determine what should be done with the animal. Depending on the severity of the injury, a decision will be made on whether or not to release the animal.

## **RESPONSE STRATEGY AND CHECKLISTS**

Response checklists have been developed for each of the five potential wolf situations listed above to facilitate a smooth and organized response:

### **1. UNCONFIRMED REPORT OF WOLF ACTIVITY (TRACKS OR SIGHTINGS)**

#### **Recipient of report:**

Take caller's name and call back information.

Contact the appropriate USFWS or WDFW office.

The USFWS or WDFW will interview the person(s) reporting the sighting and record all relevant information regarding the sighting on the appropriate form and mark the location on a map.

When warranted and resources are available, the WDFW or its designated agents will conduct a follow-up field investigation to try to determine if wolves are in fact in the area, particularly when multiple credible reports come in from the same area.

## **2. VERIFIED WOLF ACTIVITY, WITHOUT A DEPREDATION OR CONFLICT**

If the presence of wild wolves is confirmed, and there has not been a livestock or domestic animal depredation or other problem incident, the first recipient of the information will respond as follows:

### **Recipient of report:**

- Take caller's name and call back information.
- Document the specific location(s) where activity has been observed.
- Contact the appropriate USFWS or WDFW office.

### **Agency Roles and Responsibilities**

WDFW will investigate verified wolf sightings and monitor wolf activity.

USFWS may assist WDFW with investigating verified wolf sightings and monitoring wolf activity.

Wildlife Services personnel may provide assistance in trapping efforts for radio-collaring wolves.

1. The agencies will coordinate and share this information with all other appropriate agencies, e.g. USFWS or WDFW, WS, US Forest Service, BLM, National Park Service (NPS), and Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR).
2. If wolf activity is within or adjacent to Tribal lands, the USFWS office involved will share this information with the affected tribe.
3. All media inquiries should be referred to USFWS External Affairs contact Doug Zimmer, and WDFW Public Affairs contacts Madonna Luers (Spokane, east of the Cascade Mountains), or Margaret Ainscough (Olympia, west of the Cascade Mountains).
4. WDFW local Enforcement Officers will provide information updates to livestock producers in the area and describe what they can legally do to discourage wolves from frequenting their property or grazing allotment.
5. Monitoring of wolf activity will be coordinated among USFWS, WDFW and WS, using one or more of the following three approaches:
  - Compile information and map locations of sightings of animals and tracks through interviews with persons(s) reporting activity.
  - Conduct periodic ground surveys (i.e., scat and track surveys, howling surveys) and/or flyovers to monitor wolf activity.
  - Use radio-telemetry to regularly track collared animal(s).



### **3. REPORT OF POSSIBLE WOLF-CAUSED DEPREDAATION ON LIVESTOCK OR OTHER DOMESTIC ANIMALS**

#### **Recipient of report:**

Take caller's name and call back information and advise the caller to protect the scene. Ask for specific directions on how to reach the scene (street names, landmarks, gates, etc).

Give the caller the following instructions to protect the scene:

- Avoid walking in and around the area;
- Keep dogs and other animals from the area to protect evidence;
- Place tarp over carcass;
- If possible, use cans or other objects to cover tracks and scats that can confirm the depredating species;
- Inform caller that a Wildlife Services investigator will be notified of the incident.

Immediately contact the appropriate USFWS or WDFW office.

#### **Agency Roles and Responsibilities**

Wildlife Services is the lead agency for investigating livestock depredations and making the determination on cause of death.

1. USFWS, WDFW, or WS will interview the person(s) reporting the incident and record all relevant information regarding the incident on the appropriate form and mark the location on a map.
2. USFWS or WDFW will contact WS and relay the information provided by the caller and request that an investigator be dispatched to the scene.
3. The responding agency will coordinate with WS, WDFW, USFWS, and the livestock owner, as needed, to ensure someone responds and that the owner is kept informed.
4. The agency will notify law enforcement, and all other appropriate agencies (e.g. US Forest Service, BLM, NPS, WA DNR).
5. If wolf activity is within or adjacent to Tribal lands, the USFWS office involved will work with the affected tribe.
6. All media inquiries should be referred to USFWS External Affairs contact Doug Zimmer, and WDFW Public Affairs contacts Madonna Luers (Spokane, east of the Cascade Mountains), or Margaret Ainscough (Olympia, west of the Cascade Mountains).

**If Wildlife Services Determines that the Depredation was Wolf-Caused:**

1. USFWS, WDFW, and WS will coordinate and consult with designated agency managers to evaluate possible response actions, assess the efficacy of non-lethal measures and document that process, and determine the appropriate response measure.
2. USFWS, in coordination with WDFW and WS, will authorize a course of action, with notification to USFWS and WDFW Law Enforcement prior to action being taken.
3. WS will implement the response efforts under the direction of the USFWS. WDFW may assist if conditions warrant.
4. WDFW local enforcement officers will provide information updates to livestock producers in the area and describe what they can legally do to discourage wolves from frequenting their property or grazing allotment.

## **4. REPORT OF A WOLF CAPTURE**

### **Recipient of report:**

Take caller's name and call back information and get detailed description of the incident location from the caller. Ask about specific directions on how to reach the scene (street names, landmarks, gates, etc), provide them with instructions on what to do until someone arrives, and inform them that USFWS or WDFW personnel will respond to the scene immediately.

Immediately contact the appropriate USFWS or WDFW office.

### **Agency Roles and Responsibilities**

WDFW will respond to wolf captures.

USFWS may assist in responding to wolf captures and will coordinate with WDFW and WS to decide on what course of action to take.

Wildlife Services may assist if conditions warrant.

1. The responding agency will interview the person(s) reporting the incident and record all relevant information regarding the incident on the appropriate form and map the location.
2. An agent from WS, or a biologist from WDFW or USFWS will be dispatched to confirm that the captured animal is a wolf and to evaluate the animal's condition.
3. If it is confirmed that the animal is a wolf, contact USFWS Office of Law Enforcement and advise them of the circumstances as soon as possible.
4. Initiate interagency coordination to determine what should be done with the animal. Depending on the severity of any injury to the animal, a decision will be made on whether or not to release the animal.
5. Upon the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement's determination that information can be released (if a wolf), the responding agency will notify all other appropriate agencies (e.g. US Forest Service, BLM, NPS, and WA DNR).
6. If wolf activity is within or adjacent to Tribal lands, the USFWS office involved will work with the affected tribe.
7. If the decision is to release the animal on site, WDFW Enforcement officers will provide information updates to livestock producers in the area and describe what they can legally do to discourage wolves from frequenting their property or grazing allotment.
8. In USFWS Office of Law Enforcement matters, refer media inquiries to the Redmond Office of Law Enforcement. In non-law enforcement matters, refer all media inquiries to USFWS External Affairs contact Doug Zimmer and WDFW Public Affairs contacts Madonna Luers (Spokane, east of the Cascade Mountains), or Margaret Ainscough (Olympia, west of the Cascade Mountains).

## **5. REPORT OF A DEAD OR INJURED WOLF**

### **Recipient of report:**

Take caller's name and call back information and advise the caller to secure the scene. Ask about specific directions on how to reach the scene (street names, landmarks, gates, etc).

Give the caller the following instructions to protect the scene:

- Treat area as a potential crime scene.
- Do not touch anything and keep all people and animals from the area.
- A tarp can be placed over the wolf carcass.
- Cans or other items can be placed over footprints and animal tracks.

Immediately contact the appropriate USFWS or WDFW office.

### **Agency Roles and Responsibilities**

WDFW will respond to reports of dead or injured wolves.

USFWS will make decisions on euthanasia of injured wolves.

WS may respond to reports of injured wolves.

1. USFWS or WDFW will contact caller to get a detailed description of the incident location.
2. USFWS or WDFW will notify USFWS and WDFW Law Enforcement, relay information provided by the caller, and request that an officer be sent to the scene.

**IF THE WOLF IS DEAD:** USFWS Law Enforcement personnel will take over the investigation and determine all subsequent aspects of the response. If there is an ongoing law enforcement investigation, refer all media inquiries to USFWS Office of Law Enforcement, Redmond.

### **IF THE WOLF IS INJURED:**

1. Dispatch a USFWS, WS or WDFW biologist to the scene to evaluate the seriousness of injuries and recommend further action and continue coordination with USFWS law enforcement agent and on-site person.
2. With USFWS Office of Law Enforcement concurrence, the USFWS and WDFW will notify all other appropriate agencies (WS, US Forest Service, BLM, NPS, and WA DNR).
3. Interagency coordination will be initiated to determine what should be done with the animal. Depending on the severity of the injury, a decision will be made on whether or not to release the animal.
4. If wolf activity is within or adjacent to Tribal lands, the USFWS will work with the affected tribe.

5. If there is an ongoing law enforcement investigation, refer all media inquiries to USFWS Office of Law Enforcement, Redmond. Otherwise, refer all media inquiries to USFWS External Affairs contact Doug Zimmer and WDFW Public Affairs contacts Madonna Luers (Spokane, east of the Cascade Mountains), or Margaret Ainscough (Olympia, east of the Cascade Mountains).

## **Attachment A: Phone Contacts to Report Wolf Observation, Injury, or Suspected Depredation**

### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Monday through Friday, 8:00 – 4:30, (except federal holidays):**

#### **Eastern Washington:**

Wenatchee..... (509) 665-3508

#### **Western Washington:**

Lacey ..... (360) 753-9440

### **USFWS Office of Law Enforcement to report dead or injured wolves:**

Spokane ..... (509) 928-6050

Lacey ..... (360) 753-7764

Redmond ..... (425) 883-8122

Bellingham ..... (360) 733-0963

Burbank (Tri-Cities)..... (509) 546-8344

Portland ..... (503) 780-9771

### **USFWS Office of Law Enforcement after hours:**

Call Washington State Patrol Office (425-649-4370). Tell dispatcher which county is involved and ask to be connected to a USFWS Special Agent.

### **Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Monday through Friday, 8:00 – 5:00:**

Spokane ..... (509) 892-1001

Ephrata ..... (509) 754-4624

Yakima ..... (509) 575-2740

Vancouver ..... (360) 696-6211

Mill Creek ..... (425) 775-1311

Montesano ..... (360) 249-4628

Olympia ..... (360) 902-2200

### **USDA Wildlife Services, Statewide, Monday through Friday, 7:30 – 4:00:**

Olympia ..... (360) 753-9884

### **For Emergency and after-hours:**

Contact your local State Patrol Office and ask to be connected to a local WDFW wildlife officer.

**Washington State 24 hr Wolf Reporting System..... (888) 584-9038**