



Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association

3901 Joppa Ave. South, St. Louis Park, MN 55416 – Phone & Fax: (952) 920-9512

January 1, 2010

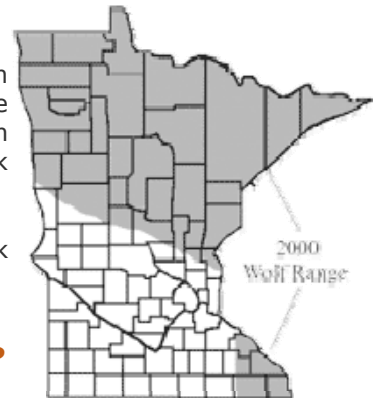
A Guide for Minnesota Farmers & Ranchers Living in Wolf Territory

For many years, the only place one could find gray wolves (also called timber wolves) in the continental United States was the deep forest of northern Minnesota. Today, wolves are making a strong comeback in Minnesota, Wisconsin & Michigan. They are spreading throughout the state. While the rebounding wolf population is an ecological success story, it creates challenges for farmers and ranchers who must find a way to protect livestock from these adaptable predators.

Where is the wolf found today?

Most reports of wolf depredation on livestock still come from the northern half of the state where wolf numbers are highest. However, every year the wolf's range stretches deeper into central and southern Minnesota. In addition, the roaming tendency of wolves means they can cause livestock losses anywhere in the state.

Bears, dogs and coyotes also occasionally attack livestock, so you must look for evidence to help determine what caused the loss.



What should I do if I suspect wolves have killed my livestock?

Recognizing the economic harm wolf depredation can have on domestic livestock, the 1977 Minnesota Legislature authorized the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to reimburse livestock owners for losses caused by wolves. USDA/Wildlife Services provides wolf trapping for cases of verified wolf attacks on domestic animals. To receive trapping services and to be eligible for state reimbursement, farmers and ranchers need to follow specific reporting procedures.

Step 1: Carefully examine the kill site and dead livestock. Be cautious not to trample over animal tracks or disturb the site. A USDA trapper or DNR conservation officer may be able to read subtle clues that you may not recognize. If the examination suggests a wild animal killed your livestock, protect your remaining animals by temporarily moving them to a more secure location, if possible.

CAUTION: Wolves are protected under federal law. It is illegal to harm or kill a wolf, except in defense of human life. Any attempt to frighten away wolves returning to kill other animals or to feed on dead livestock must be done without harming the wolf in any way.

Step 2: Preserve the evidence of the suspected wolf kill as much as possible and then report the kill. To be eligible for state compensation, you must report a suspected wolf kill within 24 hours of discovery to a DNR conservation officer or county extension educator. Make a note of who took your report and the day and time of your report for future reference.

Step 3: After reporting the incident, a DNR conservation officer or county extension educator will investigate and verify the wolf kill for compensation. You will be asked to complete an application for state compensation. The report will then be sent to the county extension office for a determination of the market value of the livestock lost. The request will then be sent to the MDA for payment.

AFFILIATED WITH THE NATIONAL CATTLEMEN'S BEEF ASSOCIATION



Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association

3901 Joppa Ave. South, St. Louis Park, MN 55416 – Phone & Fax: (952) 920-9512

What can I do to prevent wolf depredation?

The University of Minnesota conducted a study in early 1999 to determine if any livestock management practices could prevent wolf depredation. The study could find no management practices certain to prevent wolf depredation. The only method proven to prevent wolf depredation was removing the depredating wolves from the farm. However, farmers and ranchers have reported a few practices that may help in some cases. These include:

- Maintaining healthy, well-fed animals. Wolves typically select the weakest and easiest prey. Healthy animals are more difficult to take. Move lame or sick animals to a safe area when possible.
- Using guard animals. Although not always effective, the presence of guard dogs can be a deterrent. When using guard dogs against wolves it is important to use several dogs, as wolves may kill a single animal. Moving and consolidating sheep, as is done in rotational grazing, can help guard dogs be more effective. Keep in mind, however, that rotational grazing is less suitable during lambing as it may disrupt the bond between mother and offspring.
- Moving calving or lambing activities closer to the barnyard. Newborns are easy prey. Some farmers move calving or lambing closer to the barnyard because it allows for more frequent monitoring.

The Costs of Prevention

These preventive practices have implementation costs and have not been shown to work in all cases. The use of guard dogs or donkeys, for example, is often a first response to predation. Unfortunately, this deterrent does not work as well for wolves due to their size and cooperative hunting habits and ability to kill large animals. Increased costs must be balanced by a reduction in losses to be cost effective.

Raising animals in close proximity significantly increases disease risk. Again, this increased risk of loss must be weighed against the benefits of reduced predation.

Warning Signs of Wolf Depredation

Farmers have reported some common signs that could indicate wolves have moved into your area. Signs may include:

- animals tightly bunched together instead of being spread across the pasture;
- the entire herd or flock is disturbed;
- sheep become panicked in the presence of herding dogs;
- increase of wolf signs on the farm;
- animals refuse to enter certain areas;
- cattle breaking through otherwise sound pasture fences;
- drastic changes in herd temperament.

AFFILIATED WITH THE NATIONAL CATTLEMEN'S BEEF ASSOCIATION



Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association

3901 Joppa Ave. South, St. Louis Park, MN 55416 – Phone & Fax: (952) 920-9512

Preserving evidence of a wolf kill

- Secure the area from the entry of livestock. Curious animals or upset mothers can destroy evidence quickly.
- Look for tracks or scat (droppings) that will show a wolf's presence. Cover with plywood or weighted cans.
- Cover livestock carcass or remains with a tarp and weight securely to keep other predators from destroying teeth marks or other evidence.
- Photograph or video tape the evidence. It is helpful to put some common object next to the evidence to document size.
- Do not disturb evidence until the federal trapper or conservation officer can investigate the site.
- Remember that under Board of Animal Health regulations you must properly dispose of carcasses within 48 to 72 hours. You may need to inform the Conservation Officer of this.

External Resources

USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services

34912 U.S. Highway 2, Grand Rapids,
MN 55744 (218) 327-3350,
Fax (218) 326-7039

Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association

Dale Lueck (218) 927-2495 or Tim Nolte
(218) 837-5598

Local DNR Conservation Officer

Contact County Sheriff's office
for phone number or call Dan Stark
MN DNR at (612) 390-0645

MN Board of Animal Health

625 Robert Street North
St. Paul, MN 55155
(651) 296-2942 or 800-627-3529

Wolf Depredation Reimbursement

MDA, Blaine White (651) 201-6578 or
www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/disaster/wolf.aspx

Wolf track
(track size up to
6 inches long)



Coyote track
(track size up to
2.6 inches long)



Remember wolves are under federal ESA protection. Federal authorities will vigorously prosecute anyone that harms a wolf that is not directly threatening to kill or injure a human being. The penalty is up to 6 months in jail and up to a \$25,000 fine.

AFFILIATED WITH THE NATIONAL CATTLEMEN'S BEEF ASSOCIATION