

Frequently Asked Questions About Wolves in Wyoming

In February 2008, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced its intention to remove wolves from the Endangered Species List in the Northern Rocky Mountains. This includes the states of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho.

Under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act, management authority for wolves in Wyoming, a portion of Montana, and Idaho will transition to the states 30 days after publication of the final delisting rule. The US Fish and Wildlife Service published the final delisting rule on February 27. That means states could assume management authority for wolves as early as March 28, 2008. However, a number of groups have filed a 60-day notice of intent to file a lawsuit challenging the Service's delisting rule, and it is possible that the transition to state management could be delayed as a result of a lawsuit.

It is important to understand that wolves are not yet delisted in Wyoming and are still under management authority of the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

In the meantime, the following are answers to some Frequently Asked Questions about wolves and wolf management in Wyoming. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department will provide updated information as events occur that might impact the transition to state management. If you have any additional questions, please contact the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Wolf Information Line at 307-777-4655 or visit the Wyoming Game and Fish Department website at: <http://gf.state.wy.us>.

Wolf Conflicts

Q: I am having problems with wolves attacking my livestock or dogs. Who do I contact?

A: Wolves are currently still under management authority of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. US Department of Agriculture APHIS Wildlife Services responds to reports of depredations by wolves and conducts control actions under contract with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Contact USDA APHIS Wildlife Services in Casper: 307-261-5336. In addition, special rules published by the Service in 2008 [the 10(j) rules] allow persons to take wolves that are in the act of attacking their stock animals or dogs when the persons are legally present on private or public land. If you should kill a wolf in defense of your stock animals or dogs, you are required contact the Service within 24 hours and you must leave the site undisturbed to provide evidence of the attack. Report any take of wolves, including opportunistic harassment, to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Western Gray Wolf Recovery Coordinator (100 North Park, Suite 320, Helena, Montana 59601; 406-449-5225).

Q: Can I kill a wolf if it is threatening me?

A: While such incidents are extremely rare, the special rules under Section 10(j) do allow a person to kill a wolf in defense of human life. The same reporting requirements apply as described above.

Q: I have heard that Wyoming will classify wolves as both a Predatory Animal and a Trophy Game Animal. What will that mean for ranchers or others who might be experiencing wolf conflicts?

A: Once wolves are officially delisted and Wyoming assumes wolf management, wolves will be classified as a Trophy Game Animal in the northwest part of the state (see official boundary description and map below) and as a Predatory Animal in the remainder of the state. Ranchers experiencing wolf depredation in the Trophy Game area will be required to contact the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to mitigate wolf depredation. Department personnel will respond within 48 hours to assess the situation and either issue a permit to kill the wolf(ves) or take action to remove the wolf(ves). However, ranchers will be allowed to immediately kill wolves that are physically in the act of attacking their livestock or other domestic animals. In such cases, the rancher will be required to notify the department within 72 hours. Ranchers in the Predatory Animal area will be able to kill wolves at any time for any reason, and do not need to contact the department before doing so, but must report the date of kill, location of kill, and sex of the wolf to the department within 10 days.

Q: Will ranchers whose livestock are killed or injured by wolves be eligible for any compensation?

A: Yes. Once wolves are delisted, ranchers in the Trophy Game area will be eligible for compensation from the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission for livestock lost to wolves upon notification and investigation by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (contact your regional Wyoming Game and Fish Department office or game warden). There will be no compensation available to ranchers in the Predatory Animal area.

Wolf Hunting

Q: I have seen wolves in the Predatory Animal area designated in Wyoming's Gray Wolf Management Plan. Can I legally kill any of those wolves?

A: No. Wyoming's wolf management plan will not be in effect until wolves are officially removed from the federal List of Threatened and Endangered Species, which will be March 28, 2008, at the earliest. Please check by calling Wyoming's Wolf Information Line: 307-777-4655 for updates about the delisting status of wolves in Wyoming and the implementation of Wyoming's wolf management plan before killing any wolves anywhere in Wyoming.

Q: When can I buy a license to hunt wolves in Wyoming?

A: If delisting proceeds, Wyoming will likely implement hunting and trapping seasons in the Trophy Game area for wolves in the fall of 2008. Proposals for these seasons will be developed and available for public review in spring of 2008.

Q: How many wolf licenses will be available? Will hunting licenses for wolves be available over the counter or through a lottery system?

A: This has yet to be determined. Proposals for the number of wolf licenses and the licensing process will be developed and available for public review in the spring of 2008. Wolves will likely be hunted under a quota system, in which only a certain number of wolves can be taken in each hunt area. Upon reaching the quota, the season will end. Quotas will assure the wolf population is maintained above the US Fish and Wildlife Service's recovery criteria.

Q: I have heard that Wyoming will classify wolves as both a Predatory Animal and a Trophy Game animal. What will that mean for hunters?

A: Once wolves are officially delisted and Wyoming's wolf management plan is in place, wolves will be classified as a Trophy Game Animal in the northwest part of the state (see official boundary description and map below) and as a Predatory Animal in the remainder of the state. In the Trophy Game area, hunters will be required to possess a wolf hunting license and may take wolves only during established seasons. In the Predatory Animal area, wolves may be taken by anyone at any time in accordance with Wyoming statutes, and there will be no closed seasons or bag limits for wolves. However, Wyoming statute requires that all wolves taken within the Predatory Animal area must be reported to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department within 10 days.

Reporting Wolf Kills

Q: Will there be any reporting requirements for people who kill wolves in Wyoming?

A: Yes. Once wolves are delisted and under state management, Wyoming statute requires anyone who kills a wolf within the area where wolves are classified as a Predatory Animal to report the date of kill, location of kill, and sex of the wolf to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department within 10 days. Licensed hunters who kill wolves in the Trophy Game area will be required to present the pelt and skull to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department within 72 hours, or as otherwise directed by the department. Ranchers who kill wolves to protect private property within the Trophy Game area will be required to report the kill to the department within 72 hours.

Q: Who do I contact if I see someone kill a wolf illegally, or if I find a dead wolf?

A: Until wolves are officially removed from the federal List of Endangered and Threatened Species, they remain under the US Fish and Wildlife Service's jurisdiction. Contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Agent at 307-261-6365. After the delisting rule takes effect and wolves under the Wyoming's management authority (March 28, 2008, at the earliest), you can call the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's stop poaching hotline at: [1-877-WGFDTIP \(1-877-943-3847\)](tel:1-877-WGFDTIP).

Other Questions About Wolves and Wolf Management in Wyoming

Q: Can I own or possess a live wolf in Wyoming?

A: No. Wyoming statutes specifically prohibit the possession of live wolves in Wyoming.

Q: I have heard that people will be able to kill wolves from airplanes. Is that true?

A: After wolves are delisted, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department will likely use aerial gunning in some cases to remove wolves that are killing livestock. This has been shown to be the most effective way to remove wolves in these situations. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has used this practice extensively in Wyoming to assist livestock owners that may be experiencing losses from wolves. However, the public will not be able to kill wolves from airplanes within the Trophy Game area. Members of the public could be issued a permit by the Wyoming Department of Agriculture to use aircraft to remove wolves within the Predatory Animal area to protect livestock.

Q: Will it be legal to kill wolves by poisoning them in Wyoming?

A: Poisoning is not a legal method to take wolves within the Trophy Game area. Wolves within the Predatory Animal area may be taken by the use of poison only in compliance with applicable Environmental Protection Agency and state statutes and regulations, and to the extent authorized by the surface management agency, if on public lands.

Q. Where can I find additional information about wolf recovery and wolf population status in Wyoming?

A. Visit the Wyoming Game and Fish Department website at: <http://gf.state.wy.us>.

Official Boundary Description of the Trophy Game Area:

Northwest Wyoming beginning at the junction of Wyoming Highway 120 and the Wyoming-Montana State line; southerly along Wyoming Highway 120 to the Greybull River; southwesterly up said river to the Wood River; southwesterly up said river to the Shoshone National Forest boundary; southerly along said boundary to the Wind River Indian Reservation boundary; westerly, then southerly along said boundary to the Continental Divide; southeasterly along said divide to the Middle Fork of Boulder Creek; westerly down said creek to Boulder Creek; westerly down said creek to the Bridger-Teton National Forest boundary; northwesterly along said boundary to its intersection with U.S. Highway 189–191; northwesterly along said highway to the intersection with U.S. Highway 26–89–191; northerly along said highway to Wyoming Highway 22 in the town of Jackson; westerly along said highway to the Wyoming-Idaho State line; north along said State line to the Wyoming-Montana State line; north, then east along said State line to Wyoming Highway 120.

Map of the Trophy Game Area:

Map depicting boundary in red of gray wolf trophy game animal area

