

MINNESOTA WOLF FACTS

MYTH: Wolves are responsible for the decline in the moose and deer populations.

FACT: Wolves and moose have coexisted for thousands of years. Moose are in decline in places where there are no wolves (New Hampshire) and moose are on the rise where there are wolves (Isle Royale). There is no evidence that wolves are the reason for a declining moose population. Studies and experts point to climate change, parasites, and disease as causes for the decline in moose. Deer were at their highest numbers when wolves were at their highest numbers in the early 2000s. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) said deer populations have been reduced through liberal hunting policies and harsh winters.

Preliminary studies show that wolves disperse deer that spread the brain worm to moose. Thus, when wolves are on the landscape, they help slow the spread of brain worm to moose by moving deer away from moose.

MYTH: Recreational wolf hunting and trapping decreases wolf-livestock conflicts.

FACT: Recreational wolf hunting and trapping causes unpredictable effects on wolf-livestock conflicts, including increases in conflicts. The killing of wolves, either in a recreational hunt or for livestock conflict, can cause unstable packs or lead to more packs of younger wolves. A scientific study by Washington State University published in December of 2014 found that killing wolves resulted in an increase in predations on livestock by wolves in the following year. Nonlethal methods such as the use of guard animals and carcass removal, can effectively reduce wolf-livestock conflicts.

MYTH: Wolf-livestock conflicts are very high in Minnesota.

FACT: Wolf-livestock conflicts are low in Minnesota. In 2021, there were 86 verified complaints of wolves at 76 sites in the state. Out of this, 72 calves/cattle were verified to be killed by wolves on farms in Minnesota. There were 152 wolves killed in response. In 2020, there were 216 wolves killed in response. This could be close to 10% of the state's estimated wolf population.

MYTH: Holding a wolf hunt will stop or reduce illegal wolf killing.

FACT: With legal wolf killing, comes more illegal and secret wolf killing. Government agents cannot control this wolf killing. Lethal methods are counterproductive and create unpredictable effects. Population estimates show packs are the smallest size ever measured.

MYTH: Wolves receive enough protections and are doing just fine.

FACT: As of January 2022, Minnesota wolves are back on the federal Endangered Species List due to states not providing enough protections. The wolf population has remained "steady," according to the MN DNR, and hundreds of wolves are killed each year legally - and more illegally.

MYTH: Snares and traps are foolproof ways to hunt wolves and other animals.

FACT: Leg-hold traps are metal jawed devices that painfully snap shut around the wolf's lower leg. They commonly trap unintended animals, including moose, bald eagles, and domestic dogs. Snares are a wire loop that act like a noose to choke or immobilize animals. Wolves' thick neck muscles often prevent their suffocation; instead they suffer painful brain bleeds. 66 percent of Minnesota voters oppose the use of traps and snares to hunt wolves.

MYTH: Minnesotans want a wolf hunt.

FACT: Minnesotans value wolves and do not want them hunted. 79 percent of DNR survey respondents said "no" to wolf hunting.

MYTH: Wolves are dangerous to people and pets.

FACT: Wolves naturally fear humans and tend to shy away from human contact. There have been only two wolf related human deaths in North America in the past 100 years. Wolves are territorial and naturally compete with dogs. However, wolves naturally fear humans and generally will not approach pets in the presence of humans.