

Nonlethal Methods to Prevent Conflicts Between Livestock and Wolves

While livestock losses from wolf predation are relatively low in Minnesota, reducing wolf-livestock conflicts is critical to helping Minnesota's farmers, wolves, and communities co-exist and thrive.

Due to federal Endangered Species Act protections, it is currently illegal for farmers to harm or kill a wolf in Minnesota and across the Great Lakes region. Instead, in Minnesota, wolves are typically killed by government agents where livestock predation has been confirmed. In 2017, there were 89 verified complaints of wolves at 76 sites in the state. Out of this, 76 calves/cattle were verified to be killed by wolves on farms in Minnesota. In response, 199 wolves were baited and killed by USDA Wildlife Services. This is likely more than 10-15% of the entire Minnesota wolf population. Existing state and federal funds are in place to compensate farmers for losses, provided the incident is reported and verified.

In an effort to reduce both the number of predator conflicts with livestock and the number wolves killed in response, Howling For Wolves promotes nonlethal methods as an important tool to assist farmers/ranchers in preventing wolf-livestock conflicts. There are several effective nonlethal methods that help reduce predator conflicts with livestock listed below. Strategic animal husbandry practices combined with nonlethal predator deterrents have been shown to considerably reduce wolf-livestock conflicts.



Alarm or Scare Devices

Combinations of alarm systems with flashing and/or moving lights and/or sounds are used for the purpose of scaring wolves from areas of livestock activity. Several products already on the market are affordable, easy to use, and have been proven effective.



Fencing/Fladry

Permanent or portable barriers and fences, sometimes electrified and enhanced with fladry, are effective ways to deter wolves. Fladry is typically a line of rope mounted along a fence line with hanging strips of yellow nylon flags. The flags frighten predators, making them unwilling to cross the line. Although its effect may decrease over time, this method is particularly helpful during high-risk times of conflict.



Livestock Protection Animals

Livestock producers have long relied on dogs and other guard animals to protect livestock from predators. In some instances, the mere presence of protection animals keeps wolves away from livestock. In other cases, guard dogs play a more active role by alerting farmers to wolves and other predators in the area.



Reduce Attractants

Removing diseased, dying, or dead animals or carcasses from areas where they can attract wolves. Like other canines, wolves have a very good sense of smell and can detect prey from miles away.



Human Presence

Regular human activity in areas where wolves are known to exist, especially during calving/lambing periods, effectively deters wolves. The underlying concept is that wolves tend to avoid humans.