

# Resources and Information for Living with Wolves

Wolves are often stereotyped as the “bad guys” of fable, myth, and folklore. The “big bad wolf” fears portrayed in “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Peter and the Wolf,” and other tales have their roots in the experiences and stories of medieval Europe. Wolves were portrayed as vile, demented, and immoral beasts. These powerful negative attitudes and misconceptions about wolves have persisted through time, perpetuated by stories, films, and word-of-mouth, even when few Americans will ever have the opportunity to encounter a wolf.

## **Wolf Depredation** (a.k.a. killing domestic animals)

As a large carnivore capable of killing large prey it is not surprising that wolves in the northern U.S. States will prey on domestic animals (depredate) most commonly cattle, sheep, turkeys, and dogs (usually bear hunting dogs). However most wolves prefer to avoid human-dominated areas and target natural prey when available, so the incidence of depredation events is typically low. For example, in Minnesota there are approximately 2-3,000 wolves and roughly 60-100 depredation cases per year. In Minnesota and Wisconsin, Federal (USDA - Wildlife Services) and state agencies (DNRs) actively mitigate wolf depredations by compensating the owner for the lost animal and removing habituated wolves if necessary with non-lethal and lethal methods. In Iowa, wolves are so uncommon, that a wolf depredation program does not currently exist. Livestock owners who experience depredation in Iowa should contact an Iowa DNR Depredation Biologist (<http://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/Landowner-Assistance/Wildlife-Damage-Management>) or the Iowa Dept. of Agriculture. Technical assistance can be provided to determine what type of animal may have depredated your livestock. However, funds are not currently available to compensate for livestock loss from depredation unless you have livestock insurance.

Further information on Wolf Depredation can be found here. <http://www.wolf.org/wolf-info/basic-wolf-info/wolves-and-humans/>.

## **Wolf-Human Interaction**

Will wolves attack humans? There are approximately 70,000 wolves in North America with roughly 40 injuries and 2 fatalities ever documented from wolf attacks. So, yes wolf-human attacks do occur, but they are exceedingly rare and often involve predisposing factors that impair the natural diversion of wolves to humans. These factors include wolves infected with rabies, habituation where wolves no longer fear humans, provocation by cornering an animal, and highly altered environments where natural habitat and food is insufficient. Healthy wild wolves have a strong fear of humans and whether this is due to extensive historic persecution by humans or our upright two-legged posture only resembled by bears is unknown. As large carnivores, wolves should be respected as dangerous and given sufficient space, however a fervent fear of wolves is unwarranted especially considering the difficulty of just seeing a wolf, much less encountering one in close proximity.

Further information on wolf-human interaction can be found at: <http://www.wolf.org/wolf-info/basic-wolf-info/wolves-and-humans/>

Source: Much of this information was adopted from the International Wolf Center, accessed at: <http://www.wolf.org/wolf-info/basic-wolf-info/wolves-and-humans/>