



1. Are night pens being used for sheep?

Yes, frequently with sheep because they are vulnerable to wolves, coyotes, bears and dogs.

2. Where can participants obtain the data you have provided? website?

This information and the PowerPoint will be available via the IWC.

3. Why do the wolves attack more cattle than sheep?

Because the number of cattle in the Mn wolf range drastically outnumbers the number of sheep - so it is a simple matter of availability.

4. What is the source for funding for the Minnesota DNR to reimburse for wolf depredation?

It's the MN Dept. of Agriculture that reimburses producers for verified wolf losses - not the MN DNR and the source is the MN legislature.

5. Can a farmer/rancher have insurance cover losses rather than state?

Yes, and many do. State compensation requires disclosure of insurance, so producers are not paid twice for same loss.

6. Are range riders used in MN? If not, why? if yes, are they successful in deterring wolf depredation?

Yes, they are used in some situations - a few larger cattle operations use them in the traditional range rider sense, but many producers just make their daily rounds on an ATV checking their herds. Increased human presence is almost always useful at deterring wolf activity, as well as locating kills and monitoring predator sign in livestock areas.

7. Can a fox outwit a wolf? Milo, age 10

Great question! Wolves, coyotes and fox, especially red fox seem very "clever" at times and can often outwit people! Red fox frequently scavenges off wolf kills and must remain vigilant, so they don't get caught and killed by a wolf, which occasionally happens. Fox tend to be able to outmaneuver wolves, especially in the woods, but a wolf has the upper hand at catching a fox in the open, like on a frozen lake, especially if there are multiple wolves.

8. Can you talk a bit about wolves in MN having greater ESA protection than out west, even though the population is higher numbers in MN?

This is a function of the US Fish and Wildlife Services attempts at removing ESA status of a fully recovered wolf population in MN over the years and the litigation that followed that put wolves back on the ESA. ID and MT wolves were delisted legislatively by congress.

9. In your experience, would you say that wolves lethally controlled are basically young animals probably during their dispersal movements?

No, depredations are mostly caused by the resident pack and tend to increase as the pack size increases.

10. When there is a confirmed depredation, how do you determine how many wolves to kill?

If lethal removal is considered, there is no pre-determination on how many wolves to take. Sometimes zero are killed and sometimes up to a dozen are removed to stop ongoing depredations. On average 2.2 wolves are removed per effort. Primary factors impacting how many wolves are taken are: how active the wolves are on/near that property and whether ongoing damage has been stopped. Incremental removal - catch one wait and see, if more damage, catch another, wait and see, etc. has been used in MN and other jurisdictions and tends to be less effective and more costly to producers, state compensation funds and wolf managers.

11. How receptive are ranchers and/or beef producers to the use of non-lethal versus lethal deterrents?

Most ranchers are very receptive to non-lethal deterrents but also see the value of lethal removal if non-lethal isn't working.

12. If Minnesota overall votes to keep wolves is the larger population choice going to override farmer/rancher desire to kill wolves?

Right now, the MN DNR is updating their wolf management plan and having discussions about how wolf damage will be managed in the future. I think it's important to remember that most ranchers desire is to keep their livestock alive and healthy, not to kill wolves.

13. To what extent, if any, will a wolf sport hunting season reduce depredation?

Based on what happened in 2013 - the year following a fairly liberal public harvest and pretty high depredation take of wolves, depredations were down significantly. In 2014 and 2015 after additional public harvest there was little to no impact on depredation. My sense is there is some overlap between public harvest and depredation take but keep in mind they are separated in time: depredation take is primarily April-October and public harvest has been November-December. I think it's possible to zone public harvest to have a greater impact on depredations.

14. I do understand the need to sometimes use lethal means to control wolves, however, doesn't the removal of an alpha cause the pack to further disperse and cause more problems in the long run?

We haven't observed that in MN. In fact, the opposite - removal of the breeding animals seems to have the greatest impact on reducing depredations.

15. A wolf attacked my sheltie dog in our yard between the barn and garage. The sheltie was injured but rescued by our 82-pound collie 8/15/2020. The collie was killed by the wolf who was then witnessed feeding on the collie's carcass 15 minutes later. Cameras with audio helped document what occurred. The wolf ran away when approached by my husband on a gator (similar to an ATV). We clearly have a number of wolves on our 200-acre property-footprints/scat/sightings. We have three horses but no other "livestock". What do you rec'd for us to prevent future losses? We are conservationist and respect wolves and other predators.

That is too bad about your dogs. While losses to livestock can be personal as well as financial, the loss of a family pet is particularly challenging. Your horses are probably ok as wolves don't go after them very frequently - but a 5'-6' woven wire fence would go a long way to protect them from harassment/potential predation by wolves. Dogs are best kept kenneled when outside alone. Motion detector yard lights may help.

16. Any option to relocate a problem wolf or pack, rather than using a lethal approach?

There is really no suitable habitat available to relocate wolves to in MN that doesn't already have wolves without likely causing more conflict wherever wolves are relocated. In the past MN DNR has asked other states if they want depredating wolves from Mn, and the answer so far has been "no thanks." Relocation is also very costly - look at the cost to relocate a handful of wolves to Isle Royale a few years ago.

17. Would extending compensation to loss of domestic dog's help increase support for predation control efforts?

Possibly. Verified dog losses are a very small part of the overall depredation picture in MN currently.

18. What happened to Jordan Grider? Wasn't that wolves?

I am not familiar with that name. There was teenaged boy attacked by a wolf in MN in August 2013 at a USFS campground in north-central MN, that is the only verified wolf attack I am aware of on a human in MN in my career of over 30 years. Wolves have killed humans in Canada in Alaska, but it is very rare. Mark McNay, Alaska Fish and Game has a good summary of wolf attacks on humans you can probably find online.

19. I live in Duluth north shore area and do avoid being out after dark. What other prevention would you recommend?

As a person if approached by a wolf or any predator - make yourself look large and be vocal, reminding the animal you are a person. Don't run away, back slowly away waving arms and being vocal. A wolf is VERY unlikely to attack you. If you have a dog with you, be extra careful - wolves often become pre-occupied when attacking dogs and don't notice nearby humans.

20. If using lethal removal, how reliable can you tell that you are getting the wolves that caused the damage, versus other wolves who happen to be in the area?

We depend a lot on staying so close to the depredation site and only trapping immediately following verified damage.

21. Do you see evidence of wolf/coyote mating?

No, despite significant overlap in wolf and coyote ranges and behavior.

22. Does the lethal removal usually or often require taking a whole pack down, or is it directed to individual wolves, such as the alpha males or females, yearlings etc.?

It varies by site/situation and time of year. It seems removal of any wolves from the pack helps reduce future depredations.

23. Approximately what percentage of packs are verified to be involved in wolf conflicts annually in MN?

I don't know if anyone has really looked at that. Very roughly speaking if wolf damage occurs at 75 sites in a year, probably 60-70 packs/pairs would be involved as sometimes one wolf pack can impact several different producers. Keeping in mind DNR estimates 500 wolf packs in the state.

24. Instead of lethal methods, why don't you just trap the wolves and relocate them to somewhere else?

There is really no suitable habitat available to relocate wolves to in MN that doesn't already have wolves without likely causing more conflict wherever wolves are relocated. In the past MN DNR has asked other states if they want depredating wolves from MN, and the answer so far has been "no thanks." Relocation is also very costly - look at the cost to relocate a handful of wolves to Isle Royale a few years ago.

25. What is the average life span of wolves?

Up to 15 years, maybe longer in captivity. 5-6 years is getting old for a wild wolf and wolves in the wild rarely reach 10 years old. It's a hard life for a wolf in the wild.

26. Were the wolves reintroduced in the 1900s larger than the wolves that were there before?

In MN wolves were not reintroduced. It's the same wolf that's always been here. The Yellowstone and central ID wolf reintroductions came from just up the Rockies in Alberta and British Columbia, so pretty much the same wolves.

27. How do you discern a coyote attack on livestock vs a wolf attack if there have been no sightings nearby?

Based on evidence at the scene: The way the animal was killed including the size and spacing of the tooth marks, the way it was fed on and any tracks or scat nearby.

28. Why are wolves bigger out west?

Good question. I don't know for sure. Some say it related to prey size - speculating it's because a large prey animal needs larger wolves to kill it. Keep in mind most critters get bigger the further north you go - deer and moose are good examples.

29. Did you investigate the case of the 2 wolves that attacked a man's Labrador Retriever on Observation Hill in central Duluth last year?

I didn't personally, one of our staff probably did or it could have been a DNR Conservation Officer. Sorry, the number of wolf/dog incidents over the years in the Duluth area has gotten a little blurry because they are pretty common.

30. Are there disincentives to deter ranchers from wolf territory in general or even just those remote areas you spoke of where there is just an individual rancher surrounded by woods?

Not to my knowledge. Where most cattle are killed by wolves in MN there were not wolves 30-40 years ago so in a sense the cows were there "first" although we know that wolves once occupied the entire state so technically, they were their "first." Farm/ranch buyouts could be used in extreme situations and was used as part of a program to manage Bovine TB in NW Mn but is very costly. Good permeant fence seems like the best solution for isolated producers in forested country, but it is cost prohibitive for most producers.

31. Is there a better way to do it other than killing? Relocation, zoos, etc.

Relocation discussed above. Zoos already have plenty of wolves and often have to prevent reproduction even there.

32. What are common differences in the depredation sites between wolves and coyotes?

Many of the sites are the same because wolf and coyote range and habitat overlap significantly in northern MN.

33. Do you ever remove coyotes or only wolves?

Because coyotes are also a common livestock predator, we generally lethally remove them if caught in a wolf trap, but do not intentionally try to catch coyotes.

34. You said you were going to explain why only about 5 family members to a pack?

I forgot to mention that 5 (4.6 to be exact in most recent DNR survey) was the winter pack count, when wolf numbers are generally at an annual low. Pack size usually increases each spring when more wolves are born.