

# Neighboring states take different tacks to deal with wolves

## WASHINGTON

### State to kill wolf pack in Stevens County

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — The state plans to kill some animals in a wolf pack, which has repeatedly preyed on livestock in Stevens County, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife said Thursday.

The wolves, known as the Smackout pack, has preyed on livestock four times since September.

“The purpose of this action is to change the pack’s behavior,” said Donny Martorello, a wolf manager for the agency. “That means incrementally removing wolves and assessing the results before taking any further action.”

The Smackout pack is one of 20 wolf packs, all in Eastern Washington, documented in Washington state in 2016. At that time, the pack was estimated to consist of eight wolves, but it has since produced an unknown number of pups. The pack roams an area near the Canadian border north of Spokane.

Wolves were wiped out in Washington early in the last century, but begin moving back into the state from Idaho and Canada earlier this century.

The state is now home to at least 115 wolves, growing at a rate of 30 percent per year, and there have been conflicts between wolves and ranchers that prompted the state to kill numerous problems wolves in recent years.

Jim Unsworth, director of Fish and Wildlife, authorized the lethal action against the Smackout pack.

The department in June adopted a policy of removing wolves that prey on livestock three times in a 30-day period or four times in a 10-month period, Martorello said.

The Smackout pack’s latest depredation against cattle was discovered July 18.

In June, a ranch employee caught two wolves in the act of attacking livestock and killed one of them, the agency said.

“This rancher has made concerted efforts to protect his livestock using non-lethal measures,” Martorello said. “Our goal is to change the pack’s behavior before the situation gets worse.”

Gray wolves have been removed from federal Endangered Species Act protections in the eastern third of the state, although they remain protected under state law.

Chase Gunnell, a spokesman for Conservation Northwest, called the decision to kill several wolves “heartrending,” but said it may prevent the entire pack from being wiped out.

“We see this is a test of the theory that early lethal intervention can disrupt depredating behavior,” Gunnell said.

He said it was clear, based on information from the agency, that the ranchers involved in this case have taken steps to avoid conflicts with wolves.

## WYOMING

### Livestock deaths hit record high

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — Gray wolves killed a record number of livestock in Wyoming last year, and wildlife managers responded by killing a record number of wolves that were responsible, according to a new federal report.

The report released by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that wolves killed 243 livestock, including 154 cattle, 88 sheep and one horse, in 2016. In 2015, 134 livestock deaths attributed to wolves were recorded.

Last year’s livestock losses in Wyoming exceeded the previous record of 222 in 2009.



This 2008 file photo provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife shows a grey wolf. A federal report says gray wolves killed a record number of livestock in Wyoming in 2016, and wildlife managers responded by killing a record number of wolves that were responsible. Throughout the west, states are dealing with wolves differently.

As a result, wildlife managers last year killed 113 wolves that were confirmed to be attacking livestock. In 2015, they killed 54 wolves.

Previously, the most wolves killed in Wyoming in any year for killing livestock was 63 in 2007.

Scott Becker, wolf program coordinator in Wyoming for the Fish and Wildlife Service, said managers can only speculate on why conflicts between wolves and livestock increased so much last year.

“I don’t think we’ll ever know with any certainty why one year is bad and another year not quite so bad,” Becker said. “It’s just the dynamic nature of managing wolves, and as managers we try to do our best to minimize that chronic loss of livestock if at all possible.”

Jim Magagna, executive vice president of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, said the problem is too many wolves are allowed to populate areas where cattle and sheep graze.

“Even though Wildlife Service was responsive to livestock losses, their approach has been that they wouldn’t remove any wolves anywhere in the state until there had actually been losses,” Magagna said.

Andrea Santarsiere, senior attorney of the Center for Biological Diversity based in Victor, Idaho, blames ranchers for not using nonlethal methods, such as portable electric fencing, to keep wolves away from livestock.

“And so when you have native predators on the landscape and non-native livestock on the landscape it’s not surprising that the predators are going to view them as prey,” Santarsiere said.

At least 377 wolves were counted in the state in 2016, according to the federal report.

Unlike Wyoming, neighboring Montana and Idaho are no longer subject to federal monitoring and are not part of the Fish and Wildlife Service report this year. Both states are still monitoring their wolf populations but are working on different and less expensive ways of counting wolves.

Montana estimates its wolf population at 477 in 2016, while Idaho does not have a count for 2016. Idaho’s last wolf count was 786 in 2015.

Wyoming has had a complicated history with wolves, which were reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park in the 1990s after

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they had been hunted and trapped out of existence throughout most of the continental U.S. last century.

Wolves were a protected species in the state until 2012, when they were delisted and handed over to the state to manage. A federal judge in 2014 reinstated federal protections for the wolves in Wyoming, but that ruling was overturned by a federal appeals court last March, allowing Wyoming to regain management.

When wolves in Wyoming were under federal control, they enjoyed protection throughout the state.

Under Wyoming’s management, wolves remain protected in Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks and the National Elk Refuge. Areas adjacent to the parks will be subject to a tightly regulated hunting season, which is expected to be approved soon by the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission. In the remainder of the state, wolves can be killed throughout the year without a need for a license, except on the Wind River Indian Reservation, which oversees management of wolves on its land.

Ken Mills, large carnivore biologist with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, said Wyoming’s wolf management plan seeks a reduced but stable population of wolves.

“Usually the fewer wolves you have the less conflicts you have,” Mills said. “It’s not 100 percent but that is certainly the goal of the state.”

## IDAHO

### Fish and Game taking heat from both sides over wolf proposal

By Lewiston (Ida.) Tribune

A process to update Idaho’s wolf management plan has rekindled the sort of hot emotions scarcely seen since the days the animals were still protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Officials at the Idaho Department of Fish and Game are likely to release a draft of their plan next month, and wolf critics claim the agency is going soft on the animals, while wolf advocates say the state is putting too much pressure on them. Both sides are upset the agency no longer intends to count wolves the way it has for the past 20 years — with the annual release of a minimum population, pack and breeding pair estimates.

Critics are steamed the new plan is not likely to include an official population goal that matches management objectives that grew out of the state’s 2002 Idaho Wolf Management and Conservation Plan. The document sets a threshold of 15 wolf packs. Above that number, wolves will be managed like other predators in the state. When the population falls below the threshold, management becomes more conservative, with an eye toward preventing animals from reverting to federal protection.

The 2002 plan doesn’t mention a population goal of 150 wolves, but over time it became understood the state would strive to maintain a minimum of 15 packs and 150 animals as a way to prevent the population hitting the threshold of 10 breeding pairs and 100 animals established as a recovery goal when wolves were reintroduced to Idaho in the 1990s.

Wolf critics want the new plan to adopt the 150 goal and for the state to aggressively manage the animals until it is met. Without the goal, they say wildlife managers won’t keep pressure on the animals.

Butch Suor of Stites acknowledges the wolf population isn’t likely to dip to 150 animals, but he still wants that to be the stated goal.

“We are not even going to be close to that, but the goal still has to be 15 and 150 — period,” he said.

Jim Hagedorn of Viola is accusing wildlife managers of aiming for a higher wolf population so the department can continue to sell wolf tags.

“We want that target down lower than what they are managing them at now,” he said. “They would like to manage it for a lot more wolves. They want to sell wolf tags and they know they can sell a lot of wolf tags if there are wolves out there bothering people. They don’t want to have any limitations on the number of wolves, and that won’t fly.”

Wolf advocates sounded the alarm this week when the department asked for public comment on a rule change that would allow hunters to use bait such as road-kill deer and elk to lure wolves into shooting range.

“It’s just horrific, the ideas that have come out in terms of how people in Idaho want to manage wolves,” said Suzanne Stone of Defenders of Wildlife at Boise. “They seem to have forgotten about fair chase and any sense of ethics in hunting. Those things seem to go out the door when people talk about wolves.”

At the end of 2015, the state had an estimated minimum wolf population of about 780 wolves. Stone said Idaho may be underestimating the number of wolves killed illegally and thus underestimating the population.

Hagedorn suspects the population is much higher — perhaps 1,500 to 2,000.

Idaho no longer is required to submit an annual wolf report to the federal government, as it was for five years following the animal’s removal from the endangered species list. The state did not release an estimate for wolf numbers at the end of last year. Jim Hayden, the state’s lead wolf manager, said the revised plan is unlikely to call for annual wolf population estimates and will instead aim to keep tabs on population trends through things like harvest information and remote monitoring through a system of game cameras.

Nor is the plan likely to have a population goal. Instead, he said the department’s management goal will be to reduce conflict.

“What we have seen is a decrease in the number of wolves in Idaho,” Hayden said. “We want to make absolutely sure they remain a state animal and are not relisted and manage the population to minimize depredation on livestock and ensure predation on ungulates is not unreasonable, particularly in those areas that ungulates are not meeting management goals.”

Deputy Director Ed Schriever at Boise said the department has the ability to continue to monitor wolves the same way it did during the first five years following delisting. But he said doing so would drain resources. Instead, he said the department is managing wolves much like it does black bears and mountain lions.

“It’s a question of prioritization. We would rather utilize those resources to really learn and understand the impacts that wolves might be causing more than an absolute number with a confidence interval around it,” he said. “By knowing what is going on with our deer and elk herds and determining the specific causes of those mortalities, we can know if we have an issue. Just knowing the number of wolves doesn’t let you know what their relative impacts are.”

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission is scheduled to hear from Hayden about wolf management at its meeting in Bonners Ferry later this month. Commissioner Dan Blanco of Moscow said he intends to fight for a population goal to be included in the plan. He said doing so is important to the hunters who recently supported the department’s fee increase legislation.

“I have pretty much said I can’t support a wolf plan that isn’t 150,” he said.

## BLOOMIN’ BLUES

# Bright color attracts eye to alpine paintbrush

By BRUCE BARNES  
For The East Oregonian

**Common Name:** Alpine Paintbrush  
**Scientific Name:** *Castilleja rhexifolia*

This is the paintbrush plant I’ve written about over the years with this column. And that is just brushing the surface of the paintbrush genus. There are nearly 100 paintbrush plants in western North America, and 26 of them are in Northeast Oregon.

The *Castilleja* genus has been moved in recent years to the family *Orobanchaceae*, joining a family of parasitic plants.

Though paintbrush plants do produce chlorophyll and create much of the energy they need, they also have tiny root-like structures that attach to the roots of nearby plants to enhance their energy supply. Digging up or pulling up a paintbrush plant will break those structures and ensure

one will be making it nearly impossible to transplant paintbrushes.

This paintbrush grows from the Cascades in British Columbia to the Blue Mountains, eastward to Manitoba, and south to New Mexico.

Within that range it is found mainly at high elevations, on alpine and subalpine meadows and slopes, hence the common name alpine.

As I’ve mentioned in previous articles, the genus *Castilleja* is named for a Spanish botanist, Domingo Castillejo. The species name *rhexifolia* means *Rhexia*-leaved, which refers to the reddish-purple color of the leaves of *Rhexia virginica*, a wildflower of eastern North America.

The stems of the alpine paintbrush are erect and seldom branching. The leaves are lance-shaped and are mostly smooth on the edges, though the upper leaves will sometimes have small pointed lobes on the leaf edges.

As with others of this genus, the

upper leaves are replaced by colored bracts. In this paintbrush the bracts are a vivid red, which is more intense in color than the similar Wyoming paintbrush that is very common in the Blues.

In some specimens of the alpine paintbrush the color is more of a rich reddish-purple. These bracts sometimes have one small pointed lobe on each side of the leaf.

The flower is surrounded by a cylindrical bract-like calyx of the same color as the bracts. Projecting out from the calyx is a long, very slender greenish structure which is the flower, and which most people never notice.

Many of the paintbrushes have had a wide variety of uses by western Indian tribes, however, there does not appear to be any use associated with this species.

**Where to find:** Alpine Paintbrush can be found in a few scattered spots in the Anthony Lakes area.



Photo By Bruce Barnes