

Living in Wolf Country

Most of Alaska is wolf habitat

Wolves generally avoid and are rarely aggressive toward people. However, as with most wild animals, wolves can behave unpredictably. There have been cases where wolves have threatened or injured people, pets, or livestock, or damaged property. These cases have usually involved wolves that were sick, injured, cornered, habituated, or food-conditioned to people or their environments.



Minimize conflicts by learning about wolf behavior

Will wolves attack when defensive?

Wolves attacks are rare. Wolves are not likely to attack even if you stumble across a den or kill site. The only time wolves may attack in defense is if they feel trapped and without a clear and easy escape route.

When are wolves most aggressive?

Habituation is when animals no longer react to humans with fear or hesitation. **Food conditioning** is when animals learn they can depend on people for food, and actively seek food from humans as a result. Most wolf attacks occur in situations where wolves are habituated, food-conditioned, or both.

Are wolves aggressive toward dogs?

Wolves defend territories, and it is common for them to kill each other in territorial disputes. As a result, wolves may sometimes attack or kill dogs. Dogs chained or off-leash around any area where wolves are present may be vulnerable to attack. Wolves that may be curious, habituated, or food-conditioned are often mistaken for rabid wolves, especially around pets and livestock.

Are rabid wolves a concern?

Rabies is always present in fox populations along northern and western coastal areas of Alaska, and wolves have contracted rabies from foxes in these areas, and into Interior Alaska. Rabies is typically transmitted through the bite of an infected animal.

Rabid wolves may exhibit some or all of these signs:

Loss of fear towards humans, approaching humans and ignoring deterrents, a glazed stare, attacking moving objects (such as vehicles), a staggering gait, biting of inanimate objects, the presence of porcupine quills, lacking a response when being struck by a thrown object, and rarely, excessive salivation.

For more information, visit our website:
www.adfg.alaska.gov



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Staying safe in wolf country



If you encounter an aggressive wolf:

- 1. Do not run.** Stand your ground.
- 2. Always face an aggressive wolf.**
Stare directly at it. If surrounded by wolves and you have other people with you, put your backs together to face as many as possible.
- 3. Be aggressive.**
Make noise, throw objects, or use deterrents to chase the wolf away.
- 4. Retreat slowly, facing the wolf, IF you can easily reach safety** (e.g., building, vehicle, tree).

If you encounter a wolf you suspect might be rabid:

- 1. If scratched or bitten, wash area with soap and water right away, then seek immediate health care.**
Rabies is fatal once symptoms appear, but also preventable. Wash the wound and seek health care right away to prevent infection.
- 2. Report wolves behaving abnormally to the nearest ADF&G office.**
If a wolf suspected of potentially exposing a person or pet to rabies (via saliva or brain tissue) is killed, the head should be submitted to the state public health lab to be tested. If negative for rabies, expensive treatment, worry, and pet quarantine may be avoided.

For kids, when wolves are reported:

Keep children close to adults outside; a small child alone is vulnerable. Consider supervising kids at bus stops, especially in the dark, and keep noise makers handy for hazing animals away from human areas.

Protect dogs and livestock:

Do not allow pets or livestock to roam free, and have indoor shelter areas for animals at night (house, shed, or barn). Update vaccinations for pets and livestock. Fence dog yards or livestock areas (chain link or electric), install lights, and clear brush around dog or livestock areas.

Keep your home and camp clean:

Avoid attracting wolves to your home/camp:

Remove food from campfires, put away unwashed cooking utensils, keep food in animal-proof containers, cook away from a tent or sleeping area, secure and pack out garbage.

Do not feed wolves or other wildlife.

