

The Status of Wolves

Biologists consider Yukon's wolf population large and healthy. This isn't the case for much of the rest of the world. Until 200 years ago, wolves ranged over most of the Northern Hemisphere, from central Mexico and North Africa to Greenland and Canada's arctic islands. Since then, their range has decreased, due mainly to habitat destruction and human action.

By the late 1960s, wolf populations were endangered or dangerously low in much of the world. Only in northern Asia, Alaska, and Canada were wolves still plentiful. Most countries enacted some form of legal protection, and wolf populations responded. Where wolves remain, the populations have stabilized or increased.

Yukon Status

There are 4,500 to 5,000 wolves in Yukon, spread throughout the territory from the British Columbia border to the Yukon North Slope. The population fluctuates, depending on the amount of food available, but it is generally considered stable.

Wolves are managed as both a big game species and a furbearer in Yukon. Hunting is allowed for wolves, under season and bag-limit restrictions, using fair chase and firearms, with a limit of seven for resident and two for non-resident hunters. Trappers require a licence to trap furbearers and, although limited by season, they are not limited to bag limits for wolves. On average, 80 wolves are trapped and 50 wolves are hunted each year, about three per cent of the population and not enough to affect the wolf population overall. It's illegal, under Yukon regulations, to waste wolf pelts, whether they're acquired by hunting or by trapping. Instead, they must be used, sold, or transferred to someone who can use them.

Wolf management in Yukon is guided by the 1992 Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, developed to assure the continued existence of wolves in the territory and to address the needs of all users. The plan is currently under review.

North American Status

According to a year 2000 estimate, Canada's wolf population was between 52,000 and 60,000 individuals, distributed across all provinces except the Maritimes and the island of Newfoundland. That's roughly twice as many animals as Russia,

with the next-largest wolf population. Wolf management is the responsibility provinces and territories, so regulations for hunting and trapping wolves vary across the country.

Wolves remain in only a few of the lower 48 United States. Minnesota has several hundred, and small numbers have been reintroduced in places like Yellowstone National Park. Alaska has the largest wolf population in the United States, at about 6,000-7,000, according to an estimate from the year 2000.

International Status

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) is an international agreement between governments, including Canada, designed to ensure international trade in wild animals or plants and their parts does not threaten their survival. CITES maintain Appendices or lists to assist in regulating this agreement. For example, international trade for commercial purposes in species listed on Appendix I, like elephant and rhinoceros, is prohibited. Species that are not necessarily now threatened with extinction but may become so unless trade is closely controlled or they look like a species that is at risk in one or more countries are listed on Appendix II. Wolves are an Appendix II listed species.

Therefore, despite the fact Yukon's wolf population is large and healthy, wolf products leaving Yukon to other countries require the Government of Yukon to issue a Federal export permit. In addition, many countries that are signatories to CITES may also require an import permit. Accompanying the export permit is confirmation that a Non Detrimental Finding or NDF has been completed for the species. This science based assessment signifies wolf harvest in Yukon is carefully managed and regulated and the trade of wolf products will not be detrimental to the survival of wolves in the territory and in Canada. Completing a Non Detrimental Finding is the joint responsibility of provincial/territorial and federal governments.

For Further Information:

Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review Committee

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