

Wolves

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are five "Xs" showing that pet dogs were confirmed as being attacked by wolves.

Two dogs killed by wolves were Spanish mastiffs from the Paul Canik farm in the southern Ashland County town of Butternut. They show up under the "livestock" column.

A third dog confirmed as a wolf kill was Bella, a 3-year-old mixed-breed dog killed at Whitney Lake near Boulder Junction on Sept. 28. That loss is not yet noted on the DNR's depredation sheet.

Those numbers do not include three other dogs that were killed, but not verified as losses to wolves. Those dogs included a beagle, Pekingese, and a Walker.

In all of 2014, 26 dogs were confirmed as wolf attacks – 22 hunting dogs were killed, one pet dog was killed, and three hunting dogs were injured.

As of Oct. 1, total confirmed livestock losses sat at 41 (not including the two Spanish mastiffs that the DNR includes under livestock losses).

Further, unconfirmed complaints of harassment and losses outweigh the verified livestock losses or harassment. A Price County farm filed a complaint involving 50 cattle, a

Sawyer County farm 30 cattle, and a Sauk County farm 30 heifers. Even if those cattle aren't killed by wolves, farmers incur costs through injuries, health issues such as pneumonia, handling problems, weight loss and fence repair, they say.

Last year through the same date the DNR had 28 verified deaths or injuries to livestock.

The DNR also lists four cases of verified "health and safety" threats that are not related to livestock or pets. Those reports came from Price, Oconto, Adams, and Douglas counties, and appear to be related to human safety.

The 22 hunting dogs killed so far by wolves in 2015 have all been in the northern part of the state. Hardest hit was Bayfield County, where nine hunting dogs were confirmed as wolf kills. Bayfield County also has recorded several farm animals and pets killed by wolves.

Larry Lear, of La Crosse, lost two hunting dogs in Bayfield County on Sept. 19 – one an 8-year-old bluetick and the other a 4-year-old Plott. "I spend three weeks in July and three weeks in August and the entire bear season up there," he said. "Our bear camp is about 8 miles from where these dogs were killed."

"We had checked all the of baits and the last bait that we

checked a bear had hit it," Lear said. "We turned loose on it (with) four dogs that would cold trail."

The dogs went out together, he said, and as the trail warmed the dogs changed off on the lead.

"I was watching them on my GPS," he said. "Then they stopped. My gut told me they were killed by a wolf. It was the third one on the track, and the fourth one came up on it."

He found both dogs dead.

Lear insists there are more wolves than the DNR reports.

"You can check those roads after a rain washes everything away and you're going to find wolf tracks on every road," he said. "Within 48 hours you would be hard pressed to find a road that doesn't have wolf tracks. There are tracks on every one of them."

No hunting dogs have been reported killed by wolves in Bayfield County since then, which Lear doesn't find surprising.

"Most everybody didn't run their dogs after that," he said.

While folks "up north" have been the hardest hit with losses to wolves, the DNR figures also reveal unconfirmed harassment of livestock, Aug. 26, in Sauk County. In addition, a man claims to have been attacked by three wolves in Adams County in south-central Wisconsin (see the Oct. 16 issue of *Wisconsin Outdoor News*).

Mike Rogers, chair of the Sauk County Conservation Congress delegation, notes that wolves have been in Sauk County for several years.

farm in Burnett County claiming 103 missing calves. Now farmers can only claim reimbursement for up to five calves, according to the DNR's Brad Koele.

The system of reimbursement gets murky, according to Koele, depending on whether the wolves are state-managed or are listed as federally endangered. When listed as federally endangered, payments are derived from endangered resources accounts. When delisted, depredation costs come from license and application revenues.

"We have also received funding from Fish and Wildlife Service Livestock Demonstration grants," Koele said. He also notes that anyone wanting reimbursement must have the depredation verified by U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services.

The impact of wolf depredation of deer on the economy in northern Wisconsin shows up in conversations with local business owners. Resort owners Cathy and Bob Weinkauff, of Deadhorse Lodge in Mercer, no longer depend on deer hunters to help sustain their business.

In business for 34 years, Cathy Weinkauff claims the lodge has lost 95 percent of its deer-hunting customers.

"They don't come any more," she said. "We rely on snowmobiling and summer fishing business."

Still, they find their customers are apprehensive.

"We have a lot of people from the city that walk the roads," she said. "It's a concern that the wolves are out there. It's not a good situation."

"We feel like there isn't much we can do," she said. "They look at the people who really want wolves, and they get their way. They don't look at the business aspect of it. We've lost up to \$20,000 a year now that we don't have any deer here anymore."

Retired DNR warden and Bayfield County resident Pat Quaintance said wolves need to be managed by the state. He is president of the Wisconsin Association of Sporting Dogs, consisting of more than 300 members around the state. He also serves on the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation board of directors.

"There are lots of wolves," Quaintance said.

He said there are at least six packs from Ashland north to Red Cliff and extending west to Hwy. A at Iron River and up to Port Wing.

Quaintance challenges the DNR's minimum count total of 746 to 771 wolves statewide (winter 2014-15).

"There are probably 50 wolves in my area," he said. "It doesn't make sense what they're saying."

"They already have the Apostle Island (National) Lakeshore off-limits to trapping," he said. "Even when delisted you couldn't trap there. It's a wolf sanctuary."

"When it gets out of control, people start whacking them," he said. "When the numbers were down to 350 (an oft-cited goal for biological and social carrying capacity), we didn't have all of these problems."

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