

2016 MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTH: Wolves are responsible for the decline in the moose and deer populations.

FACT: Wolves and moose have coexisted for thousands of years. Moose are in decline in places where there are no wolves (New Hampshire) and moose are on the rise where there are wolves (Isle Royale). There is no evidence that wolves are the reason for a declining moose population. Studies and experts point to climate change, parasites and disease as causes for the decline in moose. Deer were at their highest numbers when wolves were at their highest numbers in the early 2000's. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officials state that deer populations have been reduced through liberal hunting policies and harsh winters.

MYTH: Recreational wolf hunting and trapping decreases wolf-livestock conflicts.

FACT: Recreational wolf hunting and trapping causes unpredictable effects on wolf-livestock conflicts, including increases of conflicts. The killing of wolves, either in a recreational hunt or for livestock conflicts, can cause unstable packs and lead to more packs of younger wolves. A scientific study by Washington State University published in December of 2014 found that killing wolves resulted in an increase in predations on livestock by wolves in the following year. Nonlethal methods such as the use of guard animals and carcass removal, can effectively reduce wolf-livestock conflicts.

MYTH: Wolf-livestock conflicts are very high in Minnesota.

FACT: Wolf-livestock conflicts are low in Minnesota. In 2011, there were 109 verified complaints of wolves at 96 sites in the state. Out of this, 91 calves/cattle were verified killed by wolves on farms in Minnesota, impacting less than 2 percent of all beef producers in Minnesota's wolf territory. There were 203 wolves killed in response.

MYTH: Snares and traps are foolproof ways to hunt wolves and other animals.

FACT: Traps are metal jawed devices that painfully snap shut around the wolf's lower leg. They commonly trap unintended animals, including moose, bald eagles, and domestic dogs. Snares are a wire loop that act like a noose to choke or immobilize animals. Wolves' thick neck muscles often prevent their suffocation; instead they suffer painful brain bleeds. 66 percent of Minnesota voters oppose the use of traps and snares to hunt wolves.

MYTH: Minnesotans want a wolf hunt.

FACT: According to a DNR survey, Minnesotans value wolves and do not want them hunted. 79 percent of DNR survey respondents, including hunters, opposed shooting, and trapping and snaring wolves.

MYTH: With their new federal protection status, wolves can't be killed if there are threats to livestock.

FACT: As of December 2014, Minnesota wolves are considered a "threatened" species, and may only be killed in defense of human life or by government agents in livestock threats. Lethal methods have been available for use in wolf-livestock conflicts since 1978.

MYTH: We have too many wolves.

FACT: With approximately 4,000 remaining in the lower 48 states, the wolf's long term survival is at stake and their recovery from near extinction has just begun. Wolves are still absent from significant portions of their former range where substantial suitable habitat remains. Wolf populations are controlled by prey density, territorial disputes, and habitat.

MYTH: Wolves are dangerous to people.

FACT: Wolves naturally fear humans and tend to shy away from human contact. There have been only two wolf related human deaths in North America in the past 100 years. To put this into perspective, domestic dogs kill between 20 and 30 people in the United States every year.

MYTH: Wolves are threats to pets.

FACT: Wolves are territorial and naturally compete with dogs. However, wolves naturally fear humans and generally will not