

*A wolf approaching a person is a dangerous situation.*



## COEXISTING WITH WOLVES

*While the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) can be found throughout Manitoba, it is most abundant in forested areas and wherever large prey animals can be found. Wolves generally try to avoid areas of human activity. However, the increasing presence of people in wilderness areas, for activities such as recreation and industry, as well as increased development at the urban-wildland interface, is resulting in more frequent encounters between people and wolves.*

*There are things you can do to reduce the risk of conflicts with wolves. This fact sheet offers some helpful advice to protect yourself, your family, your property and wolves.*

### THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WOLVES

- Wolves are closely related to coyotes and domestic dogs. At 30 to 50 kilograms (kg) in size, wolves are larger than coyotes (10 to 16 kg in size), have a broader snout and ear tips that are more rounded. While running, wolves tend to carry their tails out behind them, unlike coyotes that will carry their tails pointed downwards.
- Wolves can become aggressive toward domestic dogs because they may view the dog as a potential competitor. Wolves will be particularly protective during the breeding season (February to March) and the denning period (April to June), or if wolf pups are nearby. Wolves may also consider smaller domestic dogs to be a potential food source, particularly when encountered off-leash.
- Wolves are very social animals that live in a cohesive family group, known as a 'pack'. The pack includes a dominant pair of breeding adults and their pups, and often yearlings or other adult members. The pack will frequently travel, hunt and rest together.
- Due to their social nature and ability to learn rapidly, wolves can become habituated to people (lose their fear of people), particularly if they encounter people more frequently and don't receive negative feedback, or if an encounter leads to a food reward for the wolf (known as food-conditioning). Wolves that are habituated or food-conditioned are more likely to approach people and become aggressive toward people.
- Wolf packs will frequently spend time together in 'rendezvous' areas during summer months. These gathering places typically include trails, beds and activity areas where the pack will feed and raise pups once they leave the den.
- Wolves are well-adapted to attacking large mammals, such as deer and moose, as a food source. They also eat other small animals (such as beaver) and will scavenge on carrion.
- Wolves may attack pets and livestock.

- Though wolf attacks on people are rare, it can happen. The risk increases if the animal has previously been fed by people, because the wolf may associate people with food.
- Wolves have an excellent sense of smell and use it to track animals and find food.
- Wolves can run for long periods of time and reach speeds up to 65 kilometres an hour.
- Wolves can carry diseases and parasites that may infect people or their animals; some of these can be transmitted through their droppings.



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## THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CONFLICT

### Remove or secure things that may attract wolves

- Never feed wildlife. Making food available to wolves, either directly or indirectly (through feeding their prey, such as deer), may attract wolves and other predators to an area. Wolves that have been fed by people will become increasingly comfortable in approaching people, and increasingly aggressive around people.
- Feed pets indoors and never leave food dishes outdoors. Wolves and other animals will be attracted to the food and odours from the food dish.
- Store garbage in a secure building or wildlife resistant container.
- Compost food items where they are inaccessible to wildlife.
- If you use a bird feeder, clean up any spilled seed frequently. Consider not setting up a bird feeder in wolf or bear country.
- In the summer, remove all ripened or fallen fruit daily in the morning and before dusk. Do not allow it to rot on the ground. Wolves can prey on other animals that come to feed on the fruit.

- Fully enclose backyard beehives and chicken coops.
- Electric fencing can be an effective deterrent to predators.

### Reduce risks for people

- Supervise young children closely. Teach them not to approach any animal unless it is on a leash and the owner says it is okay.
- When walking in an area that may include wolves:
  - Try to travel in pairs or groups. Keep children within the group, don't allow them to run ahead or lag behind.
  - Stay away from areas with a known den, rendezvous, or kill site, or where wolves have frequently been seen or have become habituated to people.
  - Make noise frequently to warn wolves of your presence. This will give them time to move away to avoid an encounter with you.
  - Carry deterrents. Deterrents include devices that make loud noises, such as a whistle or rattle (e.g., pebbles in a canister). Physical deterrents, such as a walking stick or fixed-blade knife are useful for personal protection.
  - Be aware of your surroundings.
  - Do not inhibit your hearing by wearing ear-buds or earphones to listen to music.
  - Try to avoid walking between dusk and dawn, when wolves and other wildlife are more active.
  - Watch for signs of wolves in the area. Signs may include tracks, droppings, or the presence of an animal carcass (indicated by the smell of rotten meat or a gathering of scavenger birds).
- Learn how to respond appropriately if you encounter a wolf (see 'If You Encounter a Wolf').
- Never approach or try to feed a wolf.
- Avoid physical contact with wolf droppings to reduce your risk of exposure to disease and parasites.
- When camping, keep your campsite clean. Cook, wash dishes and store food away from sleeping areas; target 100 metres distance. Keep attractants out of your tent; this includes, food, garbage, toiletries and clothes you have worn while cooking. Store these items where they can't be accessed by wolves or other wildlife. Pack out all garbage and leftover food.



*In wolf country, make noise frequently to warn wolves of your presence. This will give them time to move away to avoid an encounter with you.*

## Report dangerous behaviours

- Certain behaviours by wolves or by people can indicate an increased risk to human safety. Early intervention can keep a problem from getting worse and could help to prevent human injury. If you observe any of the behaviours listed below, please make note of the location and report the situation to a conservation officer as soon as possible. Higher-risk behaviours include:
  - a wolf that shows fearless behaviour around people; it may quietly observe people for a period of time (rather than move away), or it may approach or stalk people
  - a wolf accessing (or attempting to access) human-based food sources such as garbage in a human developed area, including a waste disposal ground
  - a wolf that is frequenting an area of human development, particularly in the daytime
  - a wolf that vocalizes (barks/howls) at a person, and may also run or trot toward the person. This can indicate the presence of a nearby den, rendezvous site, or pups.
  - a wolf that appears sick or injured
  - a person deliberately attempting to feed a wolf
  - food or garbage left unsecured in campgrounds, field camps, back-country campsites or on other provincially-managed lands

## Reduce risks for pets

- Wolves have been known to attack pets. Do not leave your pet outside unattended.
- Bring pets inside at night. If your pet must be let outside at night to do its business, use light and noise deterrents, including human presence, to increase its safety.
- Restrain (leash) your dog when walking it, to reduce the potential of it harassing a wolf, or of being attacked by one. Unrestrained pets are at greater risk.
- Ensure your pet receives appropriate vaccinations. Talk to your veterinarian about your pet's vaccination needs.

## Reduce risks for livestock

For more information visit:

[www.manitoba.ca/predator\\_management](http://www.manitoba.ca/predator_management)

- Use beneficial management practices for raising livestock.
- Properly dispose of deadstock so that it is not accessible to predators.
- Use guardian animals and electric fencing to protect livestock. Livestock guardian dogs are particularly useful; select larger breeds and use more than one dog. Consider outfitting the dogs with spike collars for their protection.
- Maintain a frequent human presence.
- Work co-operatively with trappers and hunters in your area to deal with problem predators.

## IF YOU ENCOUNTER A WOLF

- Stop, remain calm and assess your situation.
- Never approach or crowd the wolf. Give it an escape route. Try to maintain a distance of at least 100 metres from the animal.
- Don't turn your back on the wolf and do not run – you may cause it to chase you.
- Pick up small children or pets. Their response to the situation is unpredictable.
- If your dog is present and is too large to pick up, bring it in close to you while trying to position yourself between the dog and the wolf.

- **Wolf Unaware of You:**

If the wolf seems unaware of you, move away quietly when it is not looking in your direction. Watch the wolf as you leave the area in case its behaviour changes.

- **Wolf Moving Away from You:**

If the wolf is aware of you and canters off, but periodically stops to look back at you, it is trying to put distance between itself and you. Wait for it to leave. Try to slowly leave the area in a different direction.

- **Wolf Showing Defensive Behaviour:**

A wolf that feels you pose a threat may display defensive behaviours. These behaviours are typically observed when a person (or a person and their dog) approaches a den, rendezvous or kill site, when pups are nearby, or if a wolf feels cornered. Defensive behaviours include growling, barking, or snarling, and the animal may have its hackles (hair along the back of its neck and shoulders) raised. If a wolf displays defensive behaviours, reassure it that you are not a threat. Slowly wave your arms over your head and speak to it calmly while you back away from the area.

- **Wolf Hanging Around or Approaching You:**

A wolf that has become habituated or food-conditioned may display 'testing' behaviours toward a person it encounters. Testing may include moving about to observe from different locations, approaching at a slow walk, or taking a couple of bounds toward the person. If a wolf approaches you in this manner, or if it stalks/follows you, haze the animal to ensure it associates people with being a threat (see 'Hazing'). Continue hazing the wolf until it leaves the area.

- **Wolf Attack:**

If a wolf attacks, fight back aggressively. Use any weapon available, including sticks or rocks. Strike at the animal's eyes and nose. If you are able to climb a nearby tree, this can also be effective in escaping a wolf attack, as they are unable to climb up after you. Climb at least two metres off the ground.

*Wolves typically live in a family group known as a 'pack'.*



## HAZING

- Hazing is a technique that can lower the risk of a wolf attack in an encounter. Hazing activities include:
  - Maintaining eye contact and staying faced toward the wolf. A direct stare is intimidating for a wolf.
  - Letting the wolf know you are human. Standing tall, shouting and waving your arms above your head to make yourself appear more threatening.
  - Making noise. You can use your voice, an air horn, a whistle, something that rattles, or anything that will make a loud noise.
  - Throwing projectiles such as small rocks, cans, sticks or balls. Never throw food.
  - Spraying the wolf with a wildlife deterrent spray (often referred to as bear deterrent spray) if the animal comes within range.

## LETHAL REMOVAL

- Wolves can be harvested by a licensed trapper or hunter during a regulated season. Trapping and hunting regulations apply.
- Under *The Wildlife Act*, in certain circumstances, a wolf may be killed to defend one's property. For additional information about this provision please contact Manitoba Government Inquiries at 204-945-3744, 1-866-MANITOBA or [mgi@gov.mb.ca](mailto:mgi@gov.mb.ca).

**For more information on reducing the risk of conflicts with wolves and other wildlife, visit [www.manitoba.ca/human-wildlife](http://www.manitoba.ca/human-wildlife).**

**To report wildlife showing aggressive behaviour or that appears sick, injured, or orphaned, contact a conservation officer at the local district office or the TIP line at 1-800-782-0076.**