



## Living with Livestock and Wolves: A Practical Guide to Avoiding Conflicts Through Non-lethal Means



### Fact Sheet 1:

## Introduction to Washington's Wolves, Wolf Behavior, and Non-lethal Wolf Deterrent Methods

Gray wolves are returning naturally to Washington State. Washington's wolves have dispersed from neighboring Canada and Idaho where wolf populations are established, and are beginning to reproduce here in Washington as well. Currently, wolves are protected throughout Washington as an endangered species under Washington State law. In the western 2/3rds of the State, wolves are also protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act. For these reasons, lethal control of gray wolves is seldom allowed and only under very narrow circumstances. This requires approval and investigation by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, (WDFW) the agency charged with managing and protecting wolves in Washington. Where wolves are still federally protected, US Fish and Wildlife Service is the responsible agency. Nonlethal methods that can help to avoid conflict with wolves are required to be in place before livestock producers are eligible for compensation from WDFW for verified livestock depredation by wolves.

Livestock producers living and working in areas where wolves may be present can utilize a variety of nonlethal wolf deterrence tools. Not all methods work in all circumstances, and many of these tools have a temporary effect on deterring wolves from approaching livestock. This series of fact sheets has been prepared to help with the evaluation and selection of the best solutions, along with frequently changing the approach, to provide the most long-lasting effects. First, a basic understanding of wolf behavior will help determine the best methods for a given situation.

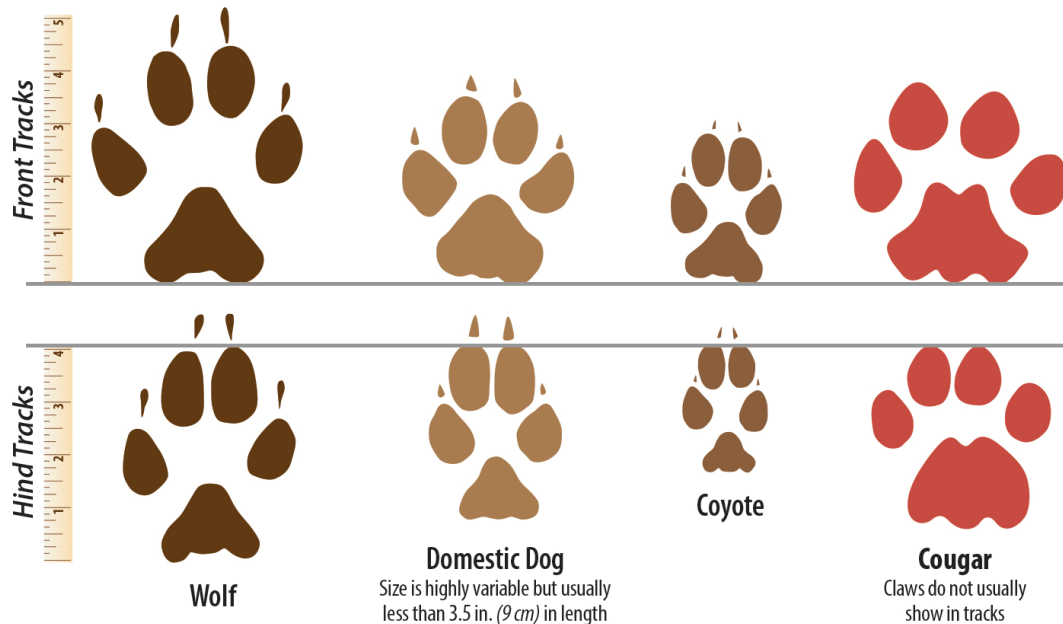
### Basic Wolf Ecology and Behavior



Wolves are highly intelligent, naturally cooperative hunters. Wolves have an inborn sensitivity that helps them detect and target the most vulnerable prey: the young, weak, injured, old or unwary. Wolves know that every hunt involves a risk of injury or death for themselves or pack mates. They need to target prey that provides the most calories for the least amount of risk and energy expended. Wolves prey primarily on deer, elk and smaller mammals and birds. Occasionally livestock become prey, particularly if wolves don't detect the presence of humans, and where pastures are shared with native ungulates. Wolves are also scavengers that readily feed on dead animals. The smell of a decomposing carcass can attract wolves and other carnivores to the area from some distance.

Curious by nature and wary of humans, wolves are intelligent and learn quickly to adapt to changed or new situations. Although they may be seen in the open, they rarely approach humans, but will observe humans and even follow them, particularly if humans are near a den or rendezvous site. The rendezvous site is a protected, partially open area, where pups are taken when they are old enough to leave the den, and where they may begin to practice hunting behaviors. There is almost always at least one adult present at the rendezvous site keeping watch over the pups until they are old enough to travel and hunt with the pack. Wolves may be particularly aggressive to herding or guardian dogs, viewed as canine competitors, near these areas.

## Identifying Wolf Sign:



### Wolf Tracks:

- Long, rather than wide, (4-5" long by 3-4.5" wide).
- 4-toed, with a triangular main pad, and claw marks.. 18-25" in stride, the distance between tracks of the same foot.
- Coyote tracks are similar, but much smaller and more rounded.
- Cougar tracks are 4-toed, round rather than oval, and lack claw marks in most cases.

### Wolf Scat:

- Wolves produce scats composed of hair, bone fragments, and other signs of their carnivorous diet.
- Coyote scats are often smaller than wolf scats and typically contain small mammal remains, berries, or insects. There can be some overlap in contents and appearance.
- Dog scats are generally more uniform in texture and shape without noticeable hair or bone fragments.
- Cougar scats (roughly large dog-sized) are dense and segmented, and usually covered with loose soil.

### Wolf Howls:

- Wolves howl in long and low tones, deep and mournful, with sustained pitch, long and low tones without yipping (except pups). Pups minus adults can sound similar to coyotes.
- Wolves seldom bark, but they do practice "bark howling" when they become alarmed.