


# Living with Wolves



Most of the state of Alaska is wolf country. Wolves usually avoid people and are rarely aggressive toward them, but, like most wild animals, their behavior can be unpredictable. There have been cases where wolves have threatened or injured people, pets, or livestock or damaged property. Usually these cases have involved wolves that are sick, injured, feel cornered, or have become habituated and food conditioned to people and their environments.

**By learning about wolf behavior and following some basic guidelines, you can minimize conflicts with wolves.**

## Know what to look for...

### Will wolves attack when defensive?

Wolves are not likely to attack even if you stumble across a den or kill site. The only time that wolves are known to exhibit defensive aggression is if they feel cornered and without a clear escape route.

### When are wolves most aggressive?

**Habituation** is when wolves no longer react to humans with fear or hesitation. **Food conditioning** is when wolves learn they can depend on people for food, and actively seek food from them as a result. Most wolf attacks occur in situations where wolves are habituated, food conditioned, or both.

### Are wolves aggressive towards dogs?

Wolves defend territories from other wolves, and it is common for them to kill each other in territorial disputes. As a result, wolves may sometimes attack or kill a dog. Dogs chained or off leash around any area that wolves inhabit can be vulnerable to an attack. Wolves that may be curious, habituated or food conditioned are often mistaken for rabid wolves, especially around dogs, pets and livestock.

### Are rabid wolves a concern?

Rabies is known to be present in wolf populations along northern and western coastal areas of Alaska, but no areas are "rabies free". Rabies is typically transmitted through the saliva of an infected animal.

#### **Rabid wolves may exhibit some or all of these signs:**

Loss of fear towards humans, approaching humans and ignoring deterrents, a glazed stare, shifting of aggression from one object to another, a staggering walk or trot, biting of inanimate objects, the presence of porcupine quills, lacking a response to being struck by a thrown object, or excessive salivation.

# What you can do

Recommendations to avoid human-wolf encounters, or respond to one if you have to:

## Keep your home and camp clean:

### Do not attract wolves to your home/camp:

- Do not leave food in campfires.
- Put away unwashed cooking utensils.
- Keep food in animal-proof containers.
- Do not cook near a tent or sleeping area.
- Secure and pack out garbage.

### Do not feed any wolves or other wildlife.

## For kids, when wolves are reported:

1. Keep children close to adults outside; a small child alone is particularly vulnerable.
2. Consider having a supervising adult waiting with kids at bus stops, especially if it is dark.
3. Keep noise makers handy for scaring animals away from human areas.

## Protect dogs and livestock:

1. Do not allow pets or livestock to roam free, and have indoor shelter areas for animals at night (house, shed or barn).
2. Fence dog yards or livestock areas (chain link or electric).
3. Install lights around dog or livestock areas.
4. Clear brush around dog or livestock areas.
5. Update vaccinations for pets and livestock.

## If you encounter an aggressive wolf:

1. **Do not run.** Stand your ground.
2. **Always face an aggressive wolf.** Stare directly at it, and if you are with other people, put your backs together.
3. **Be aggressive.** Make noise, throw objects, or use deterrents to chase the wolf away.
4. **Retreat** slowly, facing the wolf, **only if** you can easily reach safety (e.g. building, vehicle, tree).

## If you encounter a rabid wolf:

1. **Any person bitten by an animal should seek immediate health care.**  
Rabies is fatal once symptoms appear. Treatment immediately after exposure is highly effective.
2. If scratched or bitten, **wash the area with soap and water right away**, then seek medical care.
3. For a dead wolf that may have exposed a person or pet to rabies, immediate submission of the carcass to a public health lab may confirm no risk of rabies, and avoid expensive and unnecessary treatment and quarantine.



For more information, visit our websites:

[www.adfg.alaska.gov](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov)  
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