

# WOLF

(*Canis lupus*)

Canid Family/Carnivore



Wolves are territorial and elusive **pack** animals. A **pack** averages 6 to 10 members ranging in age from that year's pups to mature adults. Organized by strict social ranking, each animal is subject to those of higher rank. Usually only the dominant male and female have a successful litter which is raised by the **pack**. Wolves hunt together for **ungulates** in late autumn and winter, and alone or in pairs for smaller animals in summer.

Newborns weigh 0.5 kg. Their blue eyes open within 10 to 12 days and change colour to gold or orange between 8 and 16 weeks of age. Pups begin eating foods **regurgitated** by the parents 2 weeks after birth and are fully **weaned** when 8 to 10 weeks old. The 2-month-old pups leave the **whelping** den when the **pack** moves to a summer living area or rendezvous site often near a bog or swamp. Young remain with the **pack** or leave to search for a mate and a new territory.

**Special features:** Wolves resemble a large German Shepherd dog but have larger paws, yellow slanted eyes, longer legs, and bigger teeth. Larger and bulkier than a coyote, wolves have smaller ears and carry their tail straight back, while the coyote generally carries its tail pointed down. Wolves are between 1.3 to 1.9 metres in total length. Adult males weigh between 32 and 45 kg and females between 24 and 41 kg.

The majority of wolves are various shades of grey, but can be black, white, red and brown. The paws have webbing between each toe and are relatively large making it easier for wolves to move over snow. Special blood vessels keep paw pads from freezing.

Wolves walk on their toes, enabling them to run faster and more quietly than animals that run on the full foot. Wolves can run for long periods of time and reach chase speeds of 65 km/hr.



Wolves hunt in packs in the winter.

**Food:** Deer, moose, bison, elk, caribou and muskox. Beavers, river otters, lynx, martens, minks, wolverines, ground squirrels, rabbits, rodents and birds.

**Denning:** Hollow logs, caves, or dug holes. The den is usually on high ground near an open water source, and has an open "room" at the end of an underground or hillside tunnel.

**Predators:** Other wolves, bears, coyotes, cougars.

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## Distribution:

All of Canada as far east as Labrador.

## Maturity:

2 years

## Average life span:

6 to 8 years

## Mating:

March and April

## Young born:

April and May

## Gestation:

60 to 63 days

1 litter a year/Average 4 to 7 pups

## Habitat:

Rough and hilly areas in remote forests, **tundra**, bogs, grasslands, and deserts.

## Management Issues:

Wolves can impact prey populations of **ungulates** and small mammals and they prey on livestock and pets. Wolves are susceptible to the same infections as domestic dogs and epidemics can drastically reduce wolf populations in a given area.

