

Run! It's wolves from Canada

Bill Hall/Lewiston Tribune

It has been brought to my attention that some Canadians aren't nearly as kind, gentle or civilized as I had thought.

Oh, the humans of that neighborly nation are every bit as affable as we've always believed. But I'm here to warn you that giant Canadian wolves are a far different matter.

I was reading a letter to the editor the other day in which a worried gentleman from the USA insisted that the wolves who have been reintroduced to the United States are actually Canadian wolves.

"These are not timber wolves like we had here years ago," the guy warned. "These are Canadian wolves that are three and four times as big."

Ouch! That gets my attention. The wolves we used to have were about the size of a coyote or a collie. Four times that would be a wolf about the size of a pony. How would you like to bump into something in the forest that resembles a pony with fangs?

Every few years, I read letters to the editor like that (sometimes warning me against Bigfoot at the same time). When the subject comes up, I get curious and take another look at the latest reports on the Internet to see how many humans those cruel critters have killed recently.

For about the last 50 years, the figures are a grand total of eight fatal attacks on humans in Europe and Russia. So it does happen.

But oddly enough, there have been no wolf-induced deaths of humans in North America in the past half-century. Nada. Niente. And if you remember your third-grade geography you will know that North America includes Canada.

So if anything, big Canadian wolves or small U.S. wolves are less likely to kill us than cougars, bears, Canadian tsetse flies or the occasional hysterical mother moose defending a calf she loves.

So what's going on here? The problem isn't that big hulking Canadian wolves are killing people left and right. The wolves haven't killed anybody on this continent for decades.

But they have killed plenty of elk and sheep and calves, and that's a legitimate and annoying problem for hunters and ranchers (not to mention chicken farmers).

Isn't it enough for a hunter or a rancher to warn people of actual, normal-sized wolves without trying to scare the general public with fantasies about marauding Canadian wolves the size of small horses?

Some of those who question the arrival in these parts of huge wolves have reached the point of believing their own science fiction yarns. And, of course, it is common when a person is trying to win an argument on public policy to exaggerate and try to scare the pants off everybody.

Two can play that game. I sometimes sit and watch our two cats romping around the house, practicing their predatory ways. And so I regret to inform my fellow cat keepers that cats are killers, like it or not. And if house cats are ever bred up to dimensions three or four times larger than their present size, muscle them out of the house as fast as you can, lock the door and call the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

But beware lest the Mounties are riding Canadian-sized wolves.

However that's probably not going to happen. If there really are Canadian wolves three or four times the size of our former wolves, then we are in deep trouble. If our original wolves were four feet long, two feet tall and weighed 100 pounds, then the giant Canadian wolves would be 15 feet long, eight feet tall, four hundred pounds and much too fond of human flesh

But I will grant those among you who are personally terrified of wolves that maybe there is something in the water up there that should concern everyone in North America, including Mexicans.

This whole business worries me. I have friends in Canada. And that agitated letter writer makes me wonder about my friend Greg, a Canadian newspaper editor, who has been astute enough to carry this column for years. I have corresponded with him but I have never met him in the flesh. But now I wonder about the possibility of everything being massively bigger up there - mountains, salmon, wheat production and maybe even Greg.

Please don't tell me he is three to four times larger than newspaper editors down here, though that may be true of his heart. After all, he is a Canadian.

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