

# Our View: What happened to 'fair chase,' ethical hunting in Idaho?

**Devin Rokyta/Moscow-Pullman Daily News**

At some point during May, someone or some people removed five wolf pups - at most just a handful of weeks old - from a den on public land in the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, about 15 miles north of Coeur d'Alene, and killed them.

Several groups have joined together to offer a \$16,000 reward for information leading to arrests and convictions in the case.

Ideally, the reward will lead to an arrest, but the incident highlights the issues Idaho has with poaching and improper management of its wildlife.

According to a 2014 story in the Lewiston Tribune, state wildlife officials in northern Idaho estimate that only about 5 percent of poaching cases ever come to light and that poachers are likely killing about 600 elk, 80 moose, 260 mule deer and 1,000 whitetail annually in northern Idaho, far more than wolves do.

Yet the hate many people have for wolves and other predators - fed mostly by ignorance and denial of science - blinds them to the fact that humans and habitat conditions have far more effect on game populations. We suppose that's how someone can justify ripping a wolf pup out of its den and slaughtering it.

Such low-lives live by the "shoot, shovel and shut up" mantra when it comes to wolves, but fortunately the type of people who would commit such a crime often have problems with the shut up part. It'll still take a decent human being to do right and report the offender.

The poaching incident also calls attention to the state's disgusting rules that make it legal to kill wolf pups in most instances. The pups could have been legally hunted had they been on private land instead of in the national forest, since many private lands in north Idaho and the north-central part of the state have year-round wolf seasons. Idaho's wolf hunt on public lands begins in August, at which time pups can be targeted anywhere.

Most hunters, we would like to believe, are responsible and ethical, so we find it perplexing as to why any would support killing wolf pups, which clearly throws the idea of "fair chase" out the window and casts a very negative light on hunting in general.

We are hopeful hunters and the public will force the state to address such unethical practices in its upcoming wolf management plan, which is scheduled for release in early December.