

Idaho steps up efforts to thin out wolf numbers

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By ERIC BARKER of the Tribune The Lewiston Tribune | [1 comment](#)

Trapping will be used to try to remove members of a wolf pack near Elk City and hunting outfitters working in Idaho's Lolo Elk Hunting zone will have another month to try to kill wolves there.

Dave Cadwallader, supervisor of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's Clearwater Region, said he approved the trapping effort after a wolf was killed by Idaho County deputies last weekend. Trappers from the federal Wildlife Services Agency will work with department officials, a landowner and the Idaho County Sheriff's Department to monitor the trap.

In May, shortly after wolves were removed from federal protection, Cadwallader gave deputies authority to shoot wolves in and around the remote mountain hamlet.

The move was made after residents reported a pack of wolves had followed elk into the town and were seen frequently throughout the winter. But few wolves were spotted until last weekend, when a resident in the Buffalo Gulch area, just outside Elk City, reported hearing persistent howling.

A deputy responded and shot and wounded an adult female wolf. The animal was tracked and killed on Sunday.

Cadwallader said officials will set traps in the area where the wolf was killed.

"We don't set traps unless there is an indication of current and ongoing activity," he said.

The female wolf will be sent to Washington State University for testing. Cadwallader expects it will test positive for the presence of tapeworms that can cause cysts in elk. People can also develop the cysts if they ingest wolf feces. The department advises people not to handle wolf feces and to practice good hygiene when handling any dead animals, including wolves.

"We are going to take it to the vet and see what kind of shape it is in," he said. "It's safe to say most of the wolves are going to have the tape worm. Regardless of the outcome, I don't know (if) this would change our behavior. We will still need to practice good hygiene."

Many of the harshest critics of wolf recovery claim the tape worms and cysts pose an imminent health threat to humans.

Cadwallader said he is extending permits given to the outfitters and their guides that allowed them to kill wolves encountered during spring black bear hunting trips. The black bear hunting season ends today.

"It's just essentially an extension of the current permit with the nexus of the bear baiting removed," he said.

No wolves were shot by outfitters during the spring bear hunting season. Cadwallader issued the original permits in an effort to reduce the population of wolves in the Lolo area by about 50 animals. Prior to wolves being removed from federal protection, Idaho sought and was close to receiving permission to help declining elk herds in the Lolo area by reducing wolf numbers. Now that the state doesn't need permission, Cadwallader said it will attempt to carry out the plan on its own. Five wolves were shot from a helicopter in May as part of that effort and one wolf was killed by law enforcement officer for the department.

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