



CANTON DU VALAIS

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Wolf Monitoring in the Canton of Valais Switzerland Identification and damage assessment for 2019

The Service of hunting, fishing and wild life, (SCPF) publishes the assessment of the presence of wolves in Valais and its impact between January 1 and October 31, 2019.

18 wolves were thus formally identified in the canton, including ten new individuals. In the same period, 205 livestock were killed throughout the cantonal territory. Finally, until the end of October 2019, two reproductions were recorded in Valais Central and Lower Valais.

205 farm animals killed

Between 1 January and 31 October 2019, 66 farm animals were killed in Upper Valais, including 34 on alpine pastures and 32 on the spring and autumn pastures. In the French speaking part of the canton, 139 farm animals died as a result of wolf attacks, including 110 on alpine pastures and 29 on the spring and autumn pastures.

In charge of the protection the herds (herds under surveillance), the Cantonal Service of Agriculture (SCA) assessed each case and advised livestock owners. According to reports by the specialists, 26 under surveillance farm animals were killed and 179 animals under no surveillance were killed.

In Upper Valais, a Scottish ox (Highland) was attacked and wounded by a wolf in an alpine pasture and had to be euthanized. In the French speaking side, two dead cows were examined following suspicions of wolf attacks. However, it was not possible to formally prove that the two animals were indeed killed by a wolf, despite the wolf DNA traces on the corpses.

The total amount of the analyzed damages, including the cost of care for injured animals, amounts to 66'615 francs. The Swiss Confederation pays 80% of the damages.

Damage to game

In the regions concerned, it was mainly red deer, roe deer, but also chamois that were attacked. 116 dead animals have been accounted for. This number is not representative as the majority of the killed animals remain unfound (areas difficult to reach in winter, bodies scattered by scavengers or completely eaten up). The actual impact can be assessed only during the next year's count. However, the latest count showed that there was no need to adjust the culling quota for the hunting season. Where the wolf is permanently established, game behavior changes, making hunting generally more difficult.

Wolf population in the Canton

The DNA tests carried out in 2019 made it possible to formally identify 18 different wolves throughout the canton. In addition to the wolves already known and listed (M59, M73, M82, M88, M89, F24, F41, F43), a new female wolf named F50 was identified in the central Valais. In the Lower Valais, a female (F54) and males M97, M98, M107, M110 M114 and M115 were identified. Finally, in the Upper Valais, two new males (M101 and M 108) were formally listed in 2019.

With regards of the presence of packs in Valais, the SCPF was able to confirm last August the birth of seven cubs in the Chablais region. Another pack of five cubs was observed this autumn on images published by private individuals from the central Valais. The accuracy of this publication could not be verified by SCPF. Meanwhile, as part of the winter monitoring, two to three young wolves born this year could be observed (without formal identification) on the photographic traps of the SCPF in the central Valais (Vallon de Réchy – Val d'Anniviers). Since then, reproduction has been proven. This means that at the end of 2019, Valais has two proven wolf packs on its territory.

Conditions for the authorization of the cull of a wolf not fulfilled

The prerequisites for granting a culling permit, whether for an isolated individual or the regulation of a wolf pack, have not been met to date. Under the current Federal Hunting law, at least 15 farm animals must be killed in a protected (guarded) situations within the territory of a pack for the issuance of a culling permit. An isolated wolf may be shot when it has killed in its territory at least fifteen farm animals, provided that there has already been damages the previous year or, if this is not the case, where the wolf has killed at least 25 farm animals in one month or at least 35 during four consecutive months. Despite a high number of animals killed, these requirements have not been met to date.

Investment in time

In 2019, game wardens worked 4,342 hours specifically on the wolf, monitoring and managing damage to farm animals. Half of the hours are devoted to monitoring and supervising specific situations and the other half to field expertise and preparing documents necessary for the compensation procedure. Dedicated office staff devoted 1197 hours of work to the processing of administrative files on the wolf, including communication.