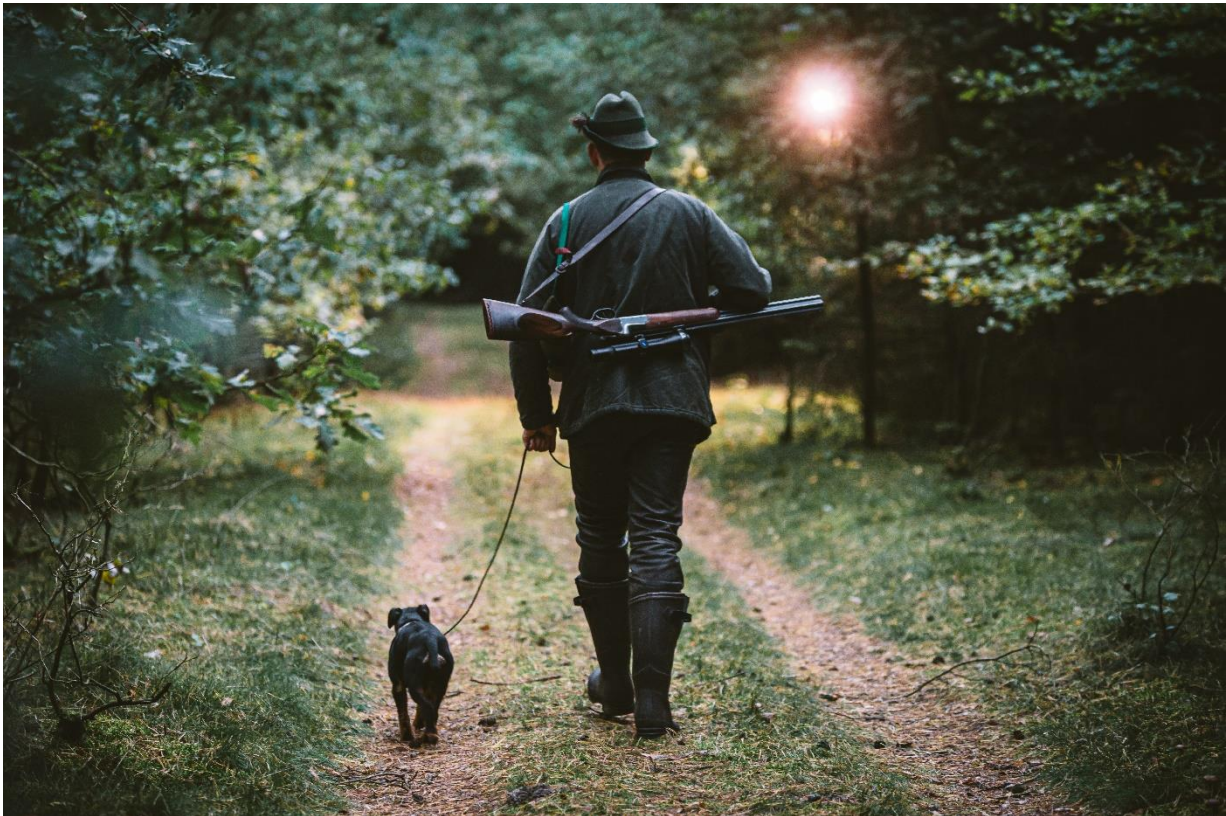


WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG BAD WOLF?



No animal seems to divide public opinion as dramatically as the wolf. Some people want to hunt and kill as many wolves as they can, while others want to keep them protected. Wolves appear in our scariest fairy tales and they are described as the bad guys. The wolf terrorized the Three Little Pigs, he scared Little Red Riding Hood. You know what he did to her poor old grandmother, right? Yes, the big bad wolf has a very bad reputation. But is he really all that bad?

Wolves are protected in some areas or killed in others, because they are seen as threats to people and animals. Yet despite the negative reputation, wolf numbers are steady or rising around the world now. In Europe, the wolves are literally at the door, and that causes protests from farmers. That's why governments in many countries compensate farmers financially for lost farm animals. In Germany farmers also receive financial support to buy guard dogs and put up fences.



So what is the truth about wolves? It probably lies somewhere in between. After all, there are two sides to every story. Wolves are not bad – they are just wolves, trying to survive in a world where they are not welcome. They are as frightened of us as we are of them, if not more so. Wolves are beautiful and intelligent creatures and they live in social systems that are similar to those of humans. They live in packs, a community sharing daily life with three to eleven other wolves. The alpha male and alpha female lead the pack. Pups are born in late April, after just a two-month pregnancy. They are born deaf, blind and weigh no more than a can of coke. Within a month, pups can hear and see, and they weigh almost five kilos, while adult wolves weigh between 38 – 55 kilos.

Now the question is: Are wolves dangerous to humans? In reality, the risk of wolves attacking or killing people is low because they are generally afraid of humans and avoid people if possible. Yet we mustn't forget that they are large wild animals which can kill prey ten times their size, so it is best not to feed them and to keep them at a safe distance. However, they can be dangerous for domestic animals. That's why some farmers and hunters demand permits to shoot them and they want the government to take wolves off the endangered species list.



Some scientists say that according to the statistics, traffic and even we humans are much more of a threat to mankind than all wolves put together. So how can we, as a society, instead of killing wolves, think of better and more effective ways to protect farm animals? Some experts recommend tall, electric fences to keep out wolves. Others suggest hanging strips of coloured fabric on a rope to deter wolves from crossing fences. That method has been used for several centuries.

A1 Answer the questions.

- 1 How do people feel about wolves?
- 2 How are wolves described in fairy tales?
- 3 Why are farmers protesting?
- 4 Do farmers get paid for their lost animals?
- 5 Are wolves afraid of people?
- 6 How many wolves are there in a pack?
- 7 How much does an adult wolf weigh?
- 8 What do farmers and hunters want?
- 9 How can farm animals be better protected?
- 10 What do you remember about wolf pups?

A2 Match the words with their definitions.

___ steady	a) an animal that is hunted and killed by another for food
___ pack	b) a barrier made of wood or wire
___ species	c) prevent someone from doing something
___ permit	d) a document that allows you to do something
___ literally	e) the opinion that people have about someone
___ deter	f) not changing; constant
___ reputation	g) actually; without exaggeration
___ prey	h) a group of living organisms that all share common characteristics
___ fence	i) a group of wild animals
___ pup	j) pay someone money for damage or loss
___ fabric	k) a baby dog or wolf
___ compensate	l) cloth

B What do you think?

- 1 Should wolves continue to be protected?
- 2 What animals do people fear most?
- 3 What animals are you most afraid of?
- 4 What animals do you like most?

C Research time

Go online and find some information about an endangered animal in Croatia and report about it to your classmates.