

# Hunting and Diet

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Packs of wolves cooperatively hunt any large herbivores in their range.

Pack hunting revolves around the chase, as wolves are able to run for long periods before relenting. It takes meticulous cooperation for a pack to take down a large prey animal, but the success rate of such chases is actually very low. Wolves, in the interest of saving energy, will only chase any one potential prey animal for the first thousand or so meters before giving up and trying again at a different time with a different prey. Hence, like most other pack species, wolves must hunt continually to sustain themselves. Solitary wolves depend more on smaller animals, capturing them by pouncing and pinning them to the ground with their front paws, a common technique among canids such as foxes and coyotes.

Wolves' diets include, but are not limited to, elk, caribou, moose, deer, and other large ungulates. The American Bison is probably the largest animal wolves prey on, with bison exceeding a ton having been taken down by a pack. They also prey on rodents, small animals, and other canids like foxes and coyotes in a limited manner, as a typical adult wolf requires a minimum of 1.1 kg (2.5 lb) of food per day for sustenance, but approximately 2.2 kg (5 lb) to reproduce successfully; however, this certainly doesn't mean that a wolf will get the chance to eat everyday. In fact, wolves rarely eat on a daily basis, so they compensate by eating up to a maximum of 10 kg (22 lb) at a single sitting when they get the chance.

When pursuing large prey, wolves generally attack from all angles, targeting the necks and sides of such animals. Wolf packs test large populations of prey species by inducing a chase, targeting less-fit individuals; such animals typically include the elderly, diseased, and young. Healthy animals may also succumb through circumstance or by chance. However, most healthy, fit individuals will stand their ground against wolves, increasing the possibility of injury for the wolves involved, which makes the weaker members of a species comparatively easier and safer to hunt.

Like many other keystone predators, wolves are sensitive to fluctuations in prey abundance, making them likely to experience minor changes within their own populations as the abundance of their primary prey species gradually rises and drops over long periods of time. This balance between wolves and their prey prevents the mass starvation of all species involved.

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