

Growth of the wolf population slows down significantly

Neuwald: Hunting does not replace herd protection

Berlin - According to the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), 209 wolf packs, 46 pairs and 19 sedentary individuals were identified in Germany in the 2023/24 monitoring year. This corresponds to an increase in territories of around 3.5 percent compared to the previous year. As in previous years, the growth of the wolf population has thus slowed significantly.

"The often claimed exponential or even uncontrolled growth of the wolf population in Germany does not exist, as the BfN figures once again show," says NABU wolf expert Marie Neuwald. Since there are still many regions in which wolves can find a suitable habitat, NABU assumes that there will gradually be more new territories in the coming years. A territory in Germany is 150 to 250 square kilometers in size and is inhabited by just one pack, i.e. an average of eight wolves.

The protection status of wolves in Europe is currently the subject of intense debate. What is lost in this discourse, which is often more political than fact-based, is that even a lower protection status or easier shooting do not relieve the fundamental need for herd protection if the goal is to reduce attacks.

"As soon as there is a wolf in a region, it is necessary to protect grazing animals, because even a single wolf can cause damage. Wolves do not learn to keep their distance from grazing animals through hunting," stresses Neuwald. "This can only be achieved by protecting herds with electric fences or - where appropriate - herd protection dogs. Individual wolves that overcome good herd protection can already be removed under current law."

In order to objectify the debate about wolf attacks, NABU is calling on the federal and state governments to standardize the documentation of attacks. The type and age of the animal affected and the state of herd protection must be included in the attack tables. However, simply stating the number of attacks per year can suggest that herd protection is of no use. However, in very few attack incidents, herd protection is breached. In Lower Saxony this year, in almost 75 percent of the attacks on sheep, even the minimum standard of herd protection was not present, and in a further 16 percent, it was impaired. The focus of the debate should therefore be on supporting grazing livestock farming in herd protection.

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