

The European Wolf

Wolves are the largest members of the dog family. These mammals once used to roam much of the Northern Hemisphere, but now live only in remote parts of Europe, mainly in the east.

Male wolves are usually larger than females. They often have silvery grey-brown backs, light tan and cream underparts, and long bushy tails. The fur can be any shade of grey, brown, black, white, or tan. An average male wolf is approximately 76 centimetres at shoulder height and can weigh up to 59kg.

Wolves are carnivores, although when food is short they will resort to eating berries and fruit. These animals co-operate to hunt their preferred prey: large animals such as deer, elk, and moose. Wolves live and hunt in packs of around six to ten animals. They are known to travel large distances in a single day.

Wolf packs are organised by a strict hierarchy, with a dominant male at the top and his mate not far behind. Generally this male and female are the only animals of the pack to breed. All of a pack's adults help to care for the young by bringing them food and watching them while others hunt. They are born between April and June and a litter is usually 4 to 6 cubs.

Wolves have a bad reputation as they do attack domestic animals and were hunted to extinction in England because of this. Should these powerful predators have a place once again in the wilder areas of the UK?