

# **Wolf conservation in Portugal: managing conflicts**

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## **Abstract**

The wolf has turned from the most widespread to the most endangered predator in the world. The recent efforts on wolf conservation must comprise a balance between complex biological, social, economic, and political aspects of wolf management. The management plans must be based on three elements: management, compensation and prevention. They should resolve wolf-human and wolf-livestock conflicts and also gain the support of people with diverse interests. To do this a spectrum of interests should be considered in designing and implementing a balanced responsive programme that recognizes the opportunities and addresses the challenges faced by people directly affected by wolves. Economical issues are one of the causes frequently mentioned. They include financial losses that result directly from wolf predation and indirect costs that may accumulate because of increased management activities, changes in husbandry practices or uncompensated losses. In this scope the development and implementation of conflict resolution tools, gains a new importance. Compensation for damages caused by wolves is one of the important elements for maintaining tolerance for wolves by livestock producers. The benefits from the compensation programme should therefore be maintained and improved. Nevertheless, other prevention measures should be increasingly implemented. Changes in livestock husbandry practices and livestock protection measures are some of the measures that can be used to decrease the potential for conflict with livestock. Thus a long-term programme of support regarding damages' prevention should be undertaken. It should be based on a cooperative work with the shepherds' community thus gaining their trust and setting the basis for a common effort that should increase their willingness to accept wolves. Wolf population management should also incorporate wolf research, public outreach and education programmes that are sensitive to the cultural needs of the community, as well as law enforcement. Although the initial response of man was to try to exterminate the wolf the possibility now exists for the development of management programmes that mitigate serious problems, enabling the wolf to live in many areas of the world where its presence would be originally unacceptable.

Palestra Convidada

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