

[REDACTED]

Van: [REDACTED]
Verzonden: dinsdag 7 oktober 2025 20:25
Aan: [REDACTED]
CC: [REDACTED]
Onderwerp: Re: Request for your expert opinion

Opvolgingsvlag: Flag for follow up
Vlagstatus: Met vlag

To: [REDACTED], Policymaker wildlife management

Provincie Gelderland, NL

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to provide you with an opinion on the case of wolf GW4655m. I have read with much interest the two excellent reports produced by EcoNatura on this case and I confirm to you that I fully agree with the methods, results and conclusions of both reports. In particular, these are my opinions on your specific questions.

- 1) 1) All evidence indicate that wolf GW4655m has reached the upper end of the so-called 'escalation ladder' of confident behaviour and, as such, it is a potentially dangerous animal that could repeat its attacks on human in an unpredictable way. According to all guidelines (included those of the Dutch Wolf Plan) suggested by the largest majority of experts on wolf management, this animal is recommended for removal from the population as soon as possible. At the level of confidentiality reached by this animal, I do not see any feasible and viable alternative to the removal. Aversive condition is often suggested as an alternative to removal: it has been used successfully in few other contexts, but it should be made clear that aversive conditions works when two conditions are satisfied: a) it is applied at the same time when the confident behaviour is shown and b) it is applied consistently and at every event when the behaviour is shown. These two conditions make the use of aversive conditions extremely difficult, being useful only in very particular situations that certainly do not apply to the case of wolf GW4655m. First, this wolf has already been able to display its confident behaviour several time without being contrasted and challenged: I think it would be extremely difficult to reverse the behaviour. Secondly, as this wolf can be in contact with people over a large area and through a great variety of situations, I do not see how a prompt aversive condition intervention could be secured. Finally, the result would be far from being guaranteed and a serious margin of risk of further attacks on human will inevitably remain.
- 2) 2) From the material I have had access to, all evidence shows that the wolf attacked the jogger when she was standing. However, the wolf may had been watching his potential "prey" for a while, when she was still running. In other words, the wolf had already judged

the jogger as a potential prey by watching her while she was running and delayed its attack for unknown reasons. It seems obvious that this wolf has no/little fear of humans and is not afraid to “test” attacks and responses, therefore should be addressed as highly problematic. Testing humans through a series of feint and real attacks could (it is not certain as we are necessarily in the realm of likelihoods) lead to raising the levels of harmfulness of the attacks: it depends on the reaction of the attacked humans and the learning by the wolf that humans can be dangerous targets. It is impossible to predict the outcome of such sequences of confrontation. This is the reason why this wolf should be removed, i.e. to bring the risk of further attacks to zero.

- 3) 3) As far as I know, it is not possible to reliably predict the possibility of repeated aggressive behaviour on the short/middle/long term from this wolf. A large number of ecological and behavioural variables play a role in determining the conditions for an attack: food availability, pack size and dynamics, human presence, individual character, age and health conditions are just few variables but the complete list is much longer and the role of each variable is in fact unknown. Therefore, again, the urgency of removing this animal is directly related to the willingness of the authorities to take the risk of another attack. In my opinion, a rational approach should call for reducing the risk as much as possible; not only to control this particular wolf but because further attacks on humans make the management of all wolves in The Netherlands and in Europe much more difficult (the spread and increase of opposition to wolves will make wolf/human coexistence and, in the end, wolf survival much more difficult to achieve).
- 4) 4) All similar cases I know of confident/problematic wolves have been resolved by the prompt removal of the offending animal and there is almost unanimous agreement among scientists and managers in Europe that this is the best approach for solving the particular cases but also for the message sent about wolf/human coexistence. Accepting the risk of further aggression is not a wise approach, especially in densely populated areas where wolves have many opportunities to interact with people and to be invited to “test” them as prey. Wolves are naturally afraid of people and will avoid close interactions but wolves are also highly intelligent and opportunistic animals and the bolder individuals could be tempted to “try” the novel prey. Wise management is also preventing and controlling the wolf/human interface by strictly forbidding humans to be close to wolves (watching and feeding) and by removing the occasional bold animals. Problematic wolves have occasionally showed up in several countries and removal has been by far the most common response. Aversive condition, as mentioned above, is a potential response but under the strict constraints explained above.
- 5) 5) Every loss of an individual wolf will have some consequence on the life of the remaining wolves. However, wolf populations are used to very high levels of mortality (as well explained in the EcoNatura reports) and the loss of an individual, be it the alfa of the pack or a subordinate, it is soon absorbed by the pack. Hierarchies will be adjusted, some behavioural pattern, feeding strategy, etc. will be realigned, but I would not rank these as relevant for the survival of the remaining pack. Wolf GW4655m is not (yet) the alfa of the pack, and two considerations can be made: a) removing this wolf would not cause any significant problem to the dynamics and functionality of the pack and b) removing this

animal is especially urgent before it becomes the leader of its pack and teaches the young wolves of the year its confident problematic behaviour with humans.

I hope these short notes will help you in moving forward with the management of this problematic animal. Time is an issue and removal, for a diversity of reasons, should be carried out as soon as possible.

My best regards

[REDACTED], Professor Emeritus, University of Roma

Chair, IUCN/SSC Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe

Il 01/10/2025 15:41, [REDACTED] ha scritto:

Dear professor [REDACTED],

On the 13th of April, a jogger was bitten by a wolf in national park 'De Hoge Veluwe' in our province of Gelderland in the Netherlands. It turned out to be an approx. 3 year old young male with genetic code GW4655m. The case is properly analysed and documented by EcoNatura in person of wolf expert Erwin van Maanen and Gijs van Aardenne (SWN) as practical operation expert. On basis of that a permission was given to outtake this wolf.

We also met each other at the Wolves Across Borders conference in Lunteren in June this year and discussed this (incident) case in a bit more detail. Please find attached the reports from EcoNatura (in Dutch) for further details. In short Van Maanen mentioned this as high-risk (habituated) and problematic behaviour. Please note that the reports are confidential.

Up to now we didn't manage to outtake this wolf. A few days after the permission was given, we ended up in court (Preliminary Relief Judge), but managed to keep the permission regarding removal intact. On the 19th of August the more in-depth procedure took place and last week we received the advice from the commission. We would greatly appreciate your expert second opinion on this urgent matter, particularly with respect to the following questions:

1. Based on the conclusion that wolf GW4655m has reached the upper end of the so-called 'escalation ladder', which according to (the Dutch Wolf Plan) intervention guidelines implies removal from the population, do you see any viable alternatives to this course of action, such as the application of aversive conditioning? If so, could you kindly outline what such an approach would most effectively entail? If not, we would appreciate your reasoning as to why this is no longer considered a feasible option.
2. Do you agree with the report's conclusion that the physical interaction with the jogger is caused by habituated behaviour, not by provocation from the jogger who was standing still at the moment of the incident (and tried to scare the wolf away by making noise) after the wolf executed several feint attacks, and therefore should be addressed as highly problematic?

3. The attack took place approximately 5-6 months ago. From that perspective, how urgent is it to outtake this wolf at this moment? From the ecological/behavioural perspective, could something be said about the chance/ possibility of repeated aggressive (bite) behaviour on the short/middle/ long-term from this individual?
4. What is the current general consensus among international wolf research and conservation experts regarding the appropriate intervention for wolves that have escalated to physical interactions with humans, specifically cases involving biting incidents, typically preceded by close human approach? In terms of the conservation status of the wolf populations: is the loss of one – problematic – individual relevant?

We highly value your expertise and would be most grateful for your advice on this matter. Given the urgency of the situation, we kindly ask for your response at your earliest convenience (regarding deadlines in the process, if it fits, preferably at the end of next week). If there are any questions or need for further information, don't hesitate to contact us.

Thank you very much in advance.

Kind regards,

[Redacted signature]

Polymaker wildlife management

[Redacted contact information]

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 provincie
Gelderland

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