



**44th Standing Committee meeting
of the Bern Convention
2-6 December 2024**

Complaint against the wolf culling policy in Norway

Siri Martinsen, NOAH – for animal rights

**Complainants: NOAH - for animal rights, prof. Ragnhild Sollund,
Asst. prof. Stefanie Reinhardt, Margareth Konst**

NOAH | for dyrs
rettigheter

Wolf in Norway

- **Categorised as “critically endangered” (CR):**
- **Very low numbers - 60 wolves**
- **Genetic depletion**
- **Reduced by 30% since last year**
- **The lowest number since 2014**



South Scandinavian wolf population

- In Sweden, categorised as “endangered” (EN)
- South Scandinavian population is “vulnerable” (VU)
- Scientific reports:
 - Scandinavian wolf population is the most inbred in the world
 - High risk of extinction if urgent measures are not taken



High annual quotas for lethal control

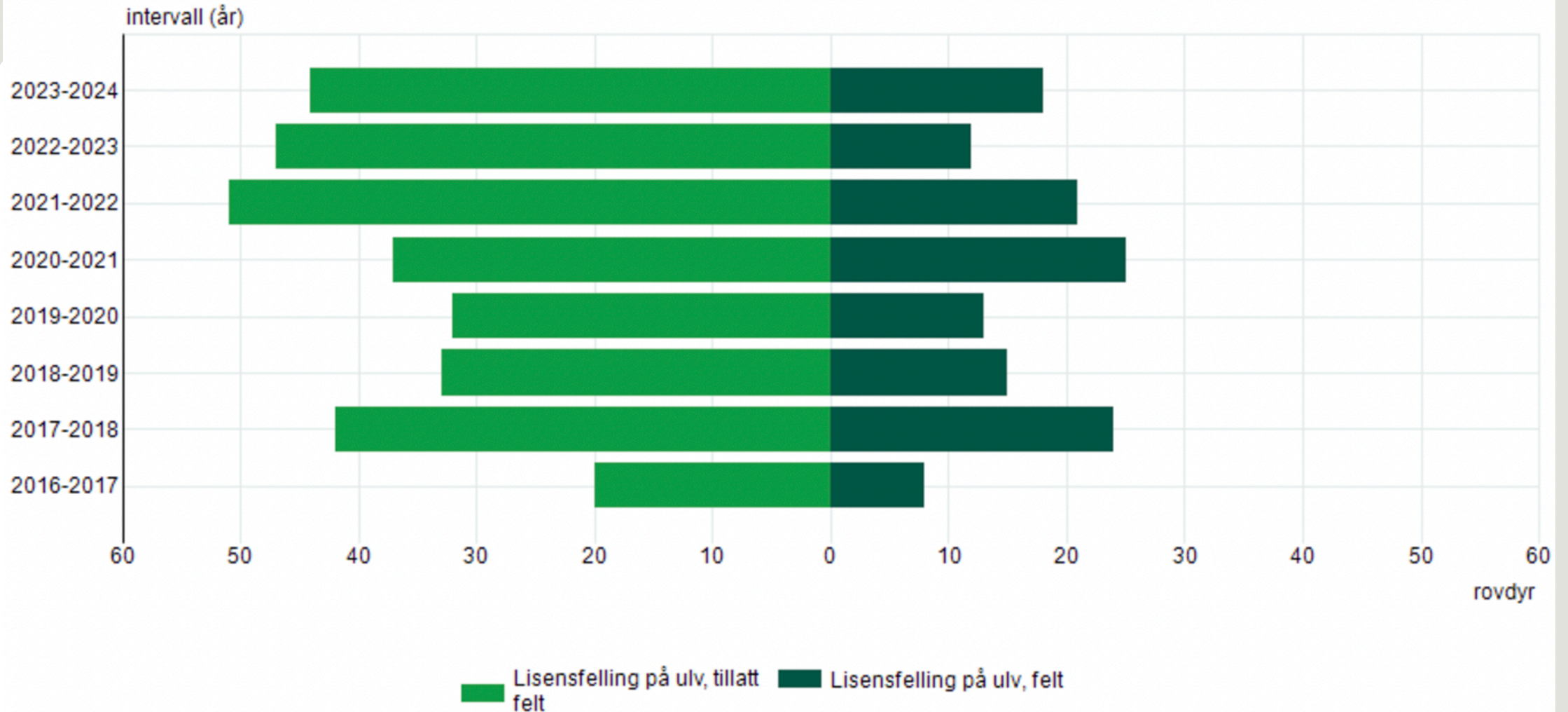
- Quotas for population control adopted annually before winter + permits for damage control throughout the year:
 - Constitute 2/3 of the Norwegian population
 - Result in extermination of 1/3 of the population
- **High quotas push the population towards extinction**
- This year, the proposed quota is 39 wolves out of a population of 60 wolves, incl. three wolf packs in the "wolf zone"

Population control of wolves (licensed hunt)

(does not include wolves killed for damage control)

Source: Statistics Norway, ssb.no

Light green - proposed quota; dark green - effectuated quota



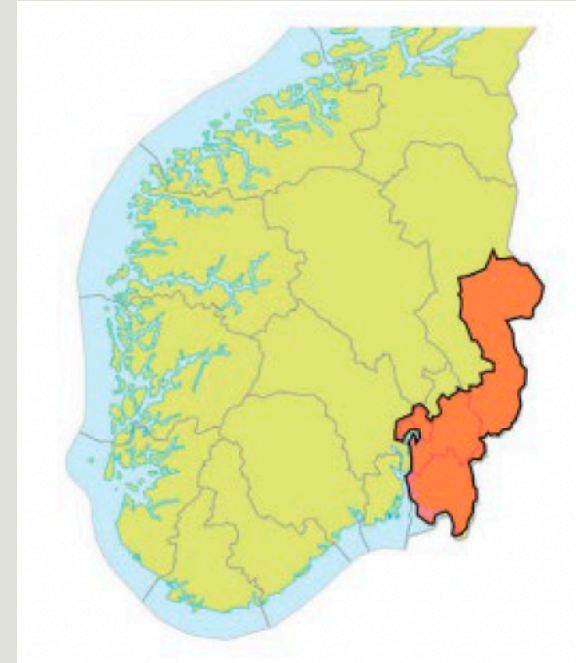
Annual culling is detrimental to the survival of the population

- Population of 60 wolves cannot survive in the long term
- High inbreeding coefficient
- Norwegian authorities rely **solely** on the transboundary population (=wolves in Sweden) when assessing the effect of derogations
- The effect of derogations is to be assessed first and foremost against the **local / national population**
- No common management agreed upon between Norway and Sweden
- Concept of transboundary management misunderstood and misapplied



Zone-based management

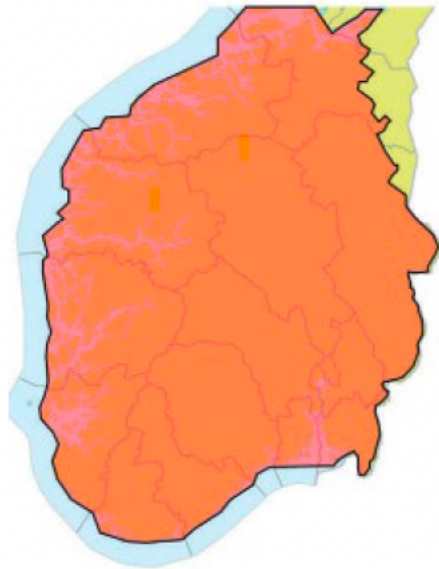
- Wolves are allowed to exist and breed only in a restricted area - 5% of land territory of Norway
- In the remaining 95% - wolf culling permits are issued almost automatically to prevent wolves from settling & no alternative measures considered nor applied
- Since 2019, culling also in the “wolf zone” (last winter, 3 wolf packs were culled)



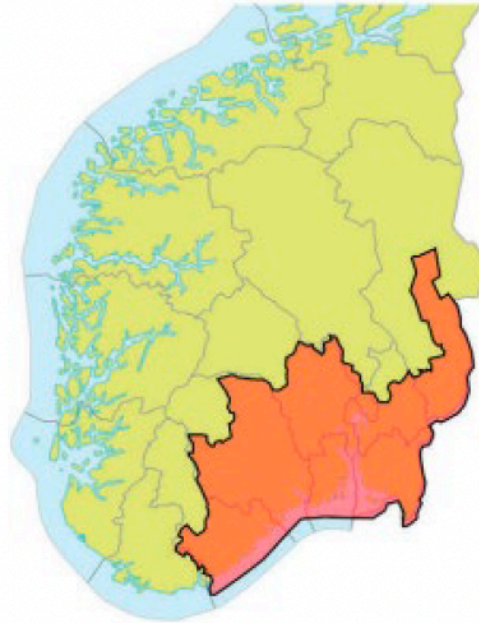
"Wolf zone" only 5% of Norway's land territory

1997-2001

SWE+NOR=
8-10 family groups

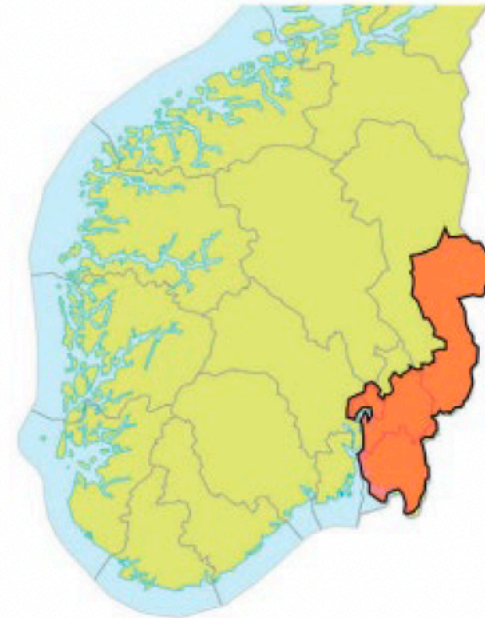


2001-2004



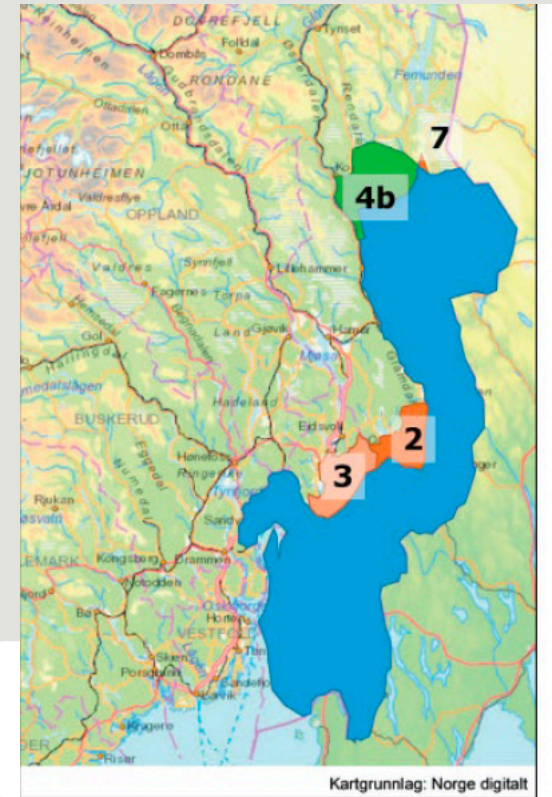
2004-2016

3 litters
per year



2016- ...

4-6 litters per year
of which at least 3 in NOR



The material ground for culling I

- No “significant” damage shown
- Keeping wolves from settling in 95% of territory defined as an “overriding public interest”, justifying culling under Article 9(1) third indent
- General societal disagreements and inconveniences related to the **mere presence** of wolves
- Keeping the wolf population down at 40-60 wolves in the “wolf zone” is defined as an “overriding public interest”, justifying culling under Article 9(1) third indent

The material ground for culling II

*“In the Ministry's view, consideration of the aim that the population is kept as close to the population target as possible dictates that a license hunting shall be carried out this year. The directorate's advice shows, in the Ministry's view, that a license hunting aimed at family groups or territory-marking pairs is necessary **if the population is to be kept as close to the population target as possible**. Without such license hunting, given the wolf's reproduction rate and wolves migrating from Sweden, there is reason to believe that in the spring of 2024 (which will appear in the annual report in June 2025) there will be **reproductions of wolves exceeding the population target.**”*

(21.12.2023, Decision on the complaints on the license hunt of wolves in the wolf zone in 2024, Ministry of the Climate and the Environment)

The material ground for culling is lacking

- Little guidance concerning the grounds that can be invoked under the exception “overriding public interests” in Article 9 of the Convention
- It should not be allowed to be invoked if the main purpose is:
 - to keep the wolf out of 95% of the territory
 - to keep the wolf population down at an extremely low level of 40-60 wolves.
- **Consequence → population kept in the critically endangered status**



Photo: [Eva Blue](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Alternative measures not considered nor applied

- Lethal control in itself is the aim of derogations
- Non-lethal measures are quickly brushed aside as non-satisfactory
- Scientific research shows that non-lethal solutions are more effective in dealing with conflict, and also preventing damages in the long-term
- Only a small fraction (14%) of the budget is used for conflict mitigation, including information measures
- Low support for culling measures + the majority of people are positive towards wolves

Photo: Statens naturoppsyn



The Complainants request that the Standing Committee:

Calls upon the Norwegian government to move away from its very aggressive wolf culling policy and to take immediate countermeasures, including:

- **to abstain from culling entire wolf packs and territory-marking pairs in the wolf zone on the grounds of “overriding public interests”;**
- **to abstain from culling wolves in the 95% of its territory on the grounds of “overriding public interests” and without the threshold of “significant damage” having been met;**
- **to let the wolf population increase so that it is no longer critically endangered in Norway;**
- **to implement non-lethal preventative measures outside the “wolf zone” and non-lethal conflict-mitigation measures in the wolf zone in order to enhance co-existence.**