

# Sweden resumes wolf hunt despite controversy

January 31 2013

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A hunter is pictured as the wolf hunt season started in Hasselforsreviret, central Sweden, on January 15, 2011. Specially bred fighting partridges face off in a pastime locally called 'kabk' in the early morning at the Central Park in Kabul on August 20, 2010

Sweden is to resume its wolf hunt in what authorities have described as a bid to limit inbreeding and maintain healthy stocks, but environmentalists argued Thursday that the hunt violates EU law.

The Swedish [Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) has authorised the killing of 16 [wolves](#) in specific territories in a hunt that starts Friday and ends February 17.

The most recent estimate a year ago put the overall number of wolves in Sweden at around 270, spread out in about 30 packs, though those numbers have most certainly risen since then.

The EPA announced Wednesday it had allowed a "selective and targeted hunt of inbred wolves as a step towards reducing inbreeding and having a sustainable, healthy wolf population".

"A selective and targeted hunt is the only method that can reduce the level of [inbreeding](#) in the short term," it said.

Wolves are considered a protected species in many parts of Europe, and Swedish [environmentalists](#) decried the hunt as illegal and said it could hurt the wolf population.

"We believe the hunt violates both EU law and Swedish hunting regulations," Oscar Alarik, legal counsel at the Swedish Society for [Nature Conservation](#) (SSNC), said Thursday.

"We don't agree with the EPA that the hunt would help sustain the wolf population. The population is not big enough for a hunt of this size," he told Swedish news agency TT.

The SSNC, WWF and Swedish Predators Association have together appealed the EPA's decision to Stockholm's Administrative Court.

Sweden's parliament voted to resume a licensed wolf hunt in 2010 after a 46-year hiatus, allowing 27 wolves to be killed.

Supporters said the cull was needed to strengthen the gene pool of Sweden's largely inbred wolf population, and wolves were imported from Finland and Russia to replace the killed animals.

The hunt was again authorised in 2011, but not in 2012.

The EPA stressed that the "selective and targeted" hunt for 2013 was not the same as the licensed hunts in 2010 and 2011.

"This is not a normal licensed hunt," EPA director Maria Aagren told TT.

But EU officials told Swedish media they were watching the situation closely to determine whether to take Sweden to the European Court of Justice.

In January 2011, the Commission reprimanded the Scandinavian country for its wolf hunt.

The hunt is supported in rural Sweden, where sheep and reindeer have increasingly come under attack.

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