

Siberian region offers bounty for wolves

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A wolf howls in the Moscow zoo on 13 December 2006. A remote Siberian region has placed a bounty on the heads of its wolf population, complaining that thousands of the predators are killing too many reindeer and horses.

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The vast Sakha Republic, home to diamond mines and the coldest

inhabited place on Earth, declared a three-month cull of wolves, aiming to cut numbers from more than 3,500 to just 500.

"The population is worried as never before by [mass deaths](#) of [domestic animals](#) due to wolves," regional chief Yegor Borisov said in a statement on his website Sunday, calling for a "state of emergency" in the region.

He announced a "three-month blitz" starting January 15 to cut the [wolf](#) population and declared open season for hunting the animals all year round.

Borisov promised a financial reward for each wolf pelt delivered, with the exact amount to be announced by the next month, as well as three bonuses running into the "six figures" (at least \$3,300, 2,500 euros) to the region's most successful wolf hunters.

Last year, just over 16,000 domesticated reindeer and 314 horses were killed, Borisov said. Hunters only shot dead 730 wolves.

The regional government put the economic cost to agriculture last year at around 150 million rubles (\$4.9 million, 3.7 million euros).

More wolves are descending into central areas due to a fall in the numbers of their natural prey, the mountain hare, according to experts.

The problem is not unique to Sakha.

In the neighbouring Zabaikalsky region, officials raised the reward for handing in a dead wolf last month to 7,000 rubles from 5,000 to encourage hunters.

The Sakha Republic, formerly known as Yakutia, is a vast, sparsely populated region, almost half of which is above the [Arctic Circle](#) and

where almost all Russian diamonds are extracted.

Sakha's village of Oymyakon has been recognised as the world's coldest inhabited place, with a lowest recorded temperature of minus 67.7 degrees Celsius (minus 89.8 degrees Fahrenheit) in 1933.

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