

Court blocks Swedish wolf hunt

January 15 2014, by Tom Sullivan



A wolfdog stands among Swedish protestors readying 20 coffins, one for each wolf killed during recently sanctioned hunt, for a protest funeral procession in central Stockholm on February 6, 2011

Plans to hold licensed wolf hunts in Sweden were blocked by a Stockholm court Wednesday following an appeal by environmental groups.

The controversial hunts, which sought to cull 30 [wolves](#) in central Sweden in early February, were part of a new government wildlife policy to reduce [wolf](#) numbers.

Responding to an appeal from the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SNCC), WWF Sweden and the Swedish Carnivore Association, the Administrative Court declared the hunts "temporarily suspended," citing claims that they violate EU conservation laws.

Environmentalists welcomed the ruling and said they were preparing to submit further evidence ahead of a January 30 deadline for a full court case on the legality of the hunts.

"We are very satisfied with the court's decision," SSNC chairman Mikael Karlsson told the Swedish news agency TT.

"We expected this to happen because the decision to stop last year's hunt is still under legal consideration."

In February 2013 the same [court](#) stopped a hunt aimed at culling 16 inbred wolves, ruling that hunts were not the right method for managing [wolf populations](#).

But since then the government has argued that the wolf population has grown and that licensed hunts are needed to protect livestock, reduce inbreeding and increase public support for maintaining wolves in the wild.

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which ordered the hunt, said it was discussing how to respond to the ruling.

"We think that wolf hunts are an important part of wildlife management and that it's important that they can be held," Gunilla Skotnicka of the EPA told TT.

The Swedish Hunters Association issued a statement calling the decision a "catastrophe for people who live and work in areas with many wolves"

and said they may consider an appeal.

Sweden's new wildlife management policy, unveiled last month, allows for wolf numbers to be cut by about a half from their current level of 350 to 400 through licensed hunts.

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