

Sheep flock to Eiffel Tower as French farmers cry wolf

November 27 2014



Sheep stand at the Champ de Mars near the Eiffel Tower in Paris during a protest by farmers demanding an effective plan by the ecology ministry to fight against wolves following an increasing number of attacks on flocks on November 27, 2014

French farmers flocked to the Eiffel Tower on Thursday, sheep in tow, to express their frustration over increasing attacks by wolves which some say have been "overprotected" by the government.

Some 300 [sheep](#) bleated or lazily grazed at the foot of the French capital's most famous monument as the farmers gathered under foggy skies to demand an effective plan to stop the wolf attacks.

"Today farmers, tomorrow unemployed," read one banner, while one of the protesters dressed as a wolf carried around a lamb.

The farmers were not alone: a rival demonstration by animal rights activists calling for the [wolves](#) to be protected also made an appearance under the Eiffel Tower.

The protesters and their livestock set off from their homes in the countryside on Wednesday morning, stopping overnight for their sheep to graze before arriving in the City of Light.

The protesters were due to meet Agriculture Minister Stephane Le Foll later in the day, and a few of the sheep are expected to accompany them to the ministry.

"We wanted to show authorities how absurd the wolf is. And since we can no longer protect our flock, we are going to ask the government to keep them," said Serge Preveraud, president of the National Ovine Federation.

French farmers have grown increasingly angry over the rise in [wolf populations](#) and want the right to cull more of the animals than the government currently allows.



Sheep graze at the Champ de Mars near the Eiffel Tower in Paris during a protest by farmers demanding a plan to fight against wolves following an increasing number of attacks on flocks on November 27, 2014

For 2014-2015 a cull of 24 wolves was ordered.

The animals were hunted almost to extinction in France in the 1930s, but crossed back into the country from Italy in the 1990s. They are now protected and number an estimated 300.

The last official figures in August showed 4,800 wolf attacks, mostly on sheep, so far this year—about 1,000 more than the same time in 2013.

"There is nothing natural about being eaten by wolves. We are against wolves from the moment they attack our farms," Claude Font, head of a sheep farmers' organisation from the central region of Auvergne, said ahead of the protest.

'A terrible stress'

Jacques Courron keeps 550 sheep in the southeastern Alpes-Maritime region, one of the worst-hit by wolf attacks.

He said that since January his farm has been attacked some 40 times, 60 of his sheep have been killed and as many have disappeared. This despite increased security, firing warning shots, protection dogs and sheltering the herd at night.

"Our job is to collect the bodies of dead sheep, or those in the throes of death. It is a terrible stress for the animals who have a lot of miscarriages," he told AFP.

France's Environment Minister Segolene Royal stepped into the row earlier this year, saying that attacks by wolves had become too frequent.

"The damage to herders has become too great," she said. "The distress of the farmers and their families should be better taken into account."

Claire, a sheep farmer from Drome in southeast France, said the constant threat of wolf attacks was "an enormous daily stress... it is omnipresent and oppressive, [farmers](#) around me feel helpless."

"Those who wanted to overprotect them are going to kick themselves. The [wolf](#) reproduces and moves around very fast," she added.

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