

Nearly 20% of Finland's wolves killed during month-long cull

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Authorities gave permits to licensed hunters to kill 46 of Finland's estimated 250 grey wolves, though three remained unused

Nearly one fifth of Finland's endangered wolf population was killed in a controversial month-long cull which ended Sunday, authorities said on Monday.

Authorities gave permits to licensed hunters to kill 46 of Finland's

estimated 250 grey wolves in a cull intended to curb illegal poaching.

"The catch was altogether 43 wolves... meaning that three permissions were left unused," Sauli Harkonen, a senior official with the Finnish Wildlife Agency, told AFP.

The hunt was the second part of a trial cull launched in 2015 to reduce illegal poaching in rural areas. It was the first time a cull had been authorised since 2007, after the European Commission accused Finland of breaching EU protection rules on the endangered species.

Finland's Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will now assess the impact of the hunt on the wolf population and on poaching before deciding if hunting should be continued in 2017.

Environmentalists worry that culls might destroy the wolves' genetic diversity.

"The hunt was very extensive since the ministry authorised (hunters) to kill 20 percent of Finland's wolf population and in addition to that, there have been exceptional permits granted by the police," said Sami Saynevirta, leader of the Finnish Nature League.

In addition to the 43 wolves killed in the cull ending Sunday, another 25 were killed in August by hunters given special permits to track down [wolves](#) that habitually roamed near homes, or which had attacked pets or livestock.

Hunting is a widespread tradition in Finland. About 300,000 people register each year for permits, one of the highest per capita rates in Europe.

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