

Wolves to the slaughter: France approves cull to save sheep

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The French government on Thursday gave the green light for the cull of dozens of wolves in mountainous areas where sheep are under sustained attack.

Over 8,000 [farm animals](#), mostly sheep, were killed in attacks blamed on

wolves in the past year—mainly in the south-east of the country.

Farmers say that electric fences and fearsome dogs are powerless in the face of the predators and are demanding greater culls.

The government gave the [green light](#) for the slaughter of up to 40 wolves by July 2018—unchanged from 2016/2017—representing a little over 10 percent of France's growing wolf population.

Once 32 wolves have been shot—usually during organised hunts—farmers are only allowed shoot a wolf to thwart an imminent strike or end an attack that is already underway.

A further eight wolves can be killed in such circumstances.

Animal rights groups have called for an end to the culls, saying warning shots would suffice to scare off the hungry predators.

Ecology Minister Nicolas Hulot said France needed to strike a balance between safeguarding wolves, a protected species in Europe, and protecting livestock.

Successive governments have, however, struggled to reconcile the competing demands of the pro-wolf and pro-farm lobbies.

After being eradicated in the 1930s [wolves](#) crossed back into France from Italy in the 1990s.

They are now to be found in 30 of France's 101 "departements" or administrative areas.

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