

Austria allows shooting wolves with rubber bullets

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Austria has authorised shooting wolves with rubber bullets to deter attacks on livestock, a regional authority said Wednesday.

The wolf population is rising rapidly in many European countries, which has led to an increase in the number of [attacks](#) on farm animals.

Farmers in three districts of Lower Austria will have the right until the end of the year to shoot [wolves](#) with rubber bullets to deter attacks but not to kill them, deputy governor Stephan Pernkopf said.

He also called for the European Union to reconsider its legislation giving protection to wolves, which he said are "no longer under threat".

Thirty-one sheep have been killed by wolves in recent weeks in Lower Austria near the Czech border, according to the local authority.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) conservation group—which puts the number of wolves in Europe at about 12,000—accused Austrian authorities of failing to help farmers protect their livestock.

"It is not wolves that are dangerous but the creation of a climate of fear," it said. "The Lower Austrian region has failed to protect flocks for years, by for example building fences and teaching farmers to live alongside wolves."

The Lower Austrian Hunting Federation praised the relaxation in the rules, saying the move would "instill fear of man" in the wolf. It also called for the use of live bullets to be considered in due course.

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