

Dangerous Wild Animals (Northern Ireland) Order 2004

Guidance on the keeping of Wolves and Wolf-Dog Hybrids



**Environment &
Heritage Service**
www.ehsni.gov.uk

- 1. Species Names** *Canis lupus* (Grey wolf)
Canis lupus x *Canis familiaris* (Wolf-dog hybrid)
- 2. Additional information** All members of *Canidae* (dog family) are included in the Schedule to the Order, EXCEPT the domestic dog, *Canis familiaris*. If a dog is NOT *Canis familiaris*, then it DOES require a licence under the Order. Captive requirements for dogs other than those species listed in paragraph 1 may vary from this guidance. Further information should be sought from the Department of the Environment before a licence application is made.
- 3. Conservation status** Some populations of the grey wolf are classified as Annex A species under EC Regulation 338/97 (relating to the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)).

Special permits must be obtained to buy, sell, breed or use Annex A species for any commercial purpose.
- 4. Housing overview** Wolves and wolf-dog hybrids are usually housed in fenced outdoor enclosures. Wolf-dog hybrids with a low wolf content may have previously been housed indoors as a domestic pet. There is no reason for this to be discontinued so long as adequate provision can be made to prevent escape, whilst complying with the other requirements of the legislation.

- 5. Keeping experience** In order to protect the welfare of these animals, keepers must be able to demonstrate a good knowledge of husbandry and handling of wolves or wolf-dog hybrids.

There should normally be a second named person nominated and included on the licence who is competent to care for the animals should the owner be absent or incapacitated.

Housing Recommendations

- 6. Construction** Wolves are accomplished climbers, jumpers and diggers. Any enclosure must be resistant to this. Outdoor enclosures must be strong enough to resist animals jumping or running against the fence.

- 7. Fencing** For outdoor enclosures, a heavy gauge chain-link fence at least 2.5 metres (8 feet) tall is recommended. If the enclosure does not have a roof, then there should be an inward sloping overhang at a 45° angle of at least 0.7 metres (2 feet). There should also be skirting of at least 1 metre (3 feet) buried inside the enclosure at right angles to the fencing to prevent tunnelling if the enclosure does not have a concrete floor.

Fence posts should be set into concrete, and any wooden posts should be protected with wire or chain to prevent chewing.

- 8. Size** The minimum recommended floor space per animal in an outdoor enclosure is 18.5 m² (200 ft²). Floor space should be increased by a further 9.5 m² (100 ft²) for each additional animal. For low wolf-content hybrids kept indoors as domestic pets, there must be sufficient provision for exercise, normally in the form of an outdoor run.
- 9. Temperature** Normal outdoor temperatures in Northern Ireland should be tolerable for wolves and wolf-dog hybrids, however some form of shelter should be provided in outdoor enclosures to protect against wind, rain and heat.
- 10. Lighting** Wolves require natural daytime lighting. If animals are to be kept indoors, suitable lighting must be provided during the day, and it must be adequate for the keeper to clean and work in the accommodation.
- 11. Ventilation** No ventilation is required in outdoor enclosures. If the animals are kept indoors, a suitable method of ventilation may be required.
- 12. Drainage** The drainage of the enclosure must be capable of removing all excess water. Any open drains, other than those carrying surface water, should be outside the enclosure. Any faecal material must be disposed of in an environmentally sound manner.

13. Cleanliness Outdoor enclosures should be maintained in a clean state, with faeces, food debris and litter being removed on a daily basis. Indoor enclosures should ideally be built and furnished with materials that can be easily cleaned and disinfected.

14. Social dynamics and behavioural considerations Wolves are pack animals and do best when housed in groups. A good understanding of pack hierarchy is desirable from keepers proposing to keep a group of wolves together. Adequate space and refuge must be provided if animals are to be kept in groups, ideally with a means for separation if necessary. Low wolf-content hybrids may be kept singly in a domestic situation.

Wolves and wolf-dog hybrids will dig to build dens. Sheltered den space should be provided in the enclosure as shelter from extreme weather and as a refuge. A den must be built from a solid material, and located far enough away from the fence to prevent the animals climbing on to it as a means of escape.

Keepers should be aware of the digging behaviour of wolves, and should check enclosures and repair holes promptly.

15. Prevention of escape

In addition to the fencing requirements, enclosures should be securely locked at all times. A double door with a space of approximately 2m² (18 ft²) separating the two gates should be erected allowing the keeper to enter without a risk of the animals escaping. Both gates should be padlocked. If low wolf-content hybrids are kept indoors in a domestic situation, suitable provision must be made to prevent the animal escaping from the property. External exercise runs should be entirely enclosed, or have a double, padlocked, entrance door.

Barbed wire should not be used on wolf enclosures. Hot (electric) wires have been used, but this must be in addition to the minimum recommended fencing requirements.

If the enclosure is accessible by the public, for example, adjoining a public highway, steps should be taken to prevent the possibility of the public gaining access to, or being injured by, the animals. This may require the erection of a secondary fence (a stand-off barrier), or a solid wall on the accessible sides of the enclosure. Warning signs may also be required.

16. Food, drink and bedding

Wolves and wolf-dog hybrids should be fed a meat diet, including bones, skin and/or fur, or a good quality high protein complete dog food. Fresh drinking water should be provided at all times. Although wild wolves do not use bedding in underground dens, some suitable insulating bedding material such as straw or cardboard should be provided in dens above ground.

- 17. Visiting interval** The animals must be monitored at appropriate intervals, normally at least once every 24 hours.
- 18. Exercise** The enclosure should be big enough for the animals to exercise. The use of enrichment is desirable, for example novel feeding methods, toys, and planting of the enclosure to provide interest.
- If wolf-dog hybrids are kept indoors, a suitable secure outdoor exercise enclosure should be available. Exercise in public places on a lead is not acceptable.
- 19. Provision for moving the animal(s)** Some contingency for safely moving animals should be in place in case veterinary attention is required, or in the event of an emergency. A crate suitable for transporting a large dog may be used, and should be lockable to prevent escape. If possible, the animals should be trained to enter the crate.
- A licence, issued by the Department of the Environment, for the keeping of these animals may specify restrictions on the movement of these animals and procedures to be followed.
- 20. Emergency planning** There should be a written contingency plan in place to be used in the event of an emergency, for example fire, flood, animal escape or injury to the keeper.

21. Notification Requirements

A licence, issued by the Department of the Environment, for the keeping of these animals may specify procedures to be followed in the event of an escape and on the provision of information to the Emergency Services (e.g. the Fire Service) on the dangerous wild animals being kept.

You are required to notify the Department of the Environment of any intentions to breed the animals.

22. Prevention and control of spread of infectious disease

The keeper should provide details of their veterinary arrangements with a practice prepared to treat wolves. A schedule of veterinary care, including routine parasite and vaccination control, is necessary and the keeping of records of veterinary attention is essential.

Animals acquired from outside the United Kingdom may be subject to rabies quarantine regulations. Anyone requiring further information should contact the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

There are no transmissible diseases carried by these animals that pose a risk to the general public as long as there is no direct contact, and visitors are not allowed to handle the animals or their by-products.

Explanatory Notes

These notes have been produced to provide people wishing to keep dangerous wild animals with guidance on the requirements they may have to meet. In determining whether or not a licence should be issued, the Department of the Environment will consider the information provided by the applicant when applying for a licence. The Department will also arrange for a suitably qualified person to carry out an inspection of the premises at which the animal or animals will be kept and the inspector's report will also be taken into consideration. It is at the Department's discretion to waive certain recommendations, or add additional ones, to the guidance provided in this document. There is a right to appeal within 21 days if a licence is refused or if the applicant contests conditions applied to a licence.

Contact Information

For further information on the Dangerous Wild Animals (Northern Ireland) Order 2004, contact the Department of the Environment, Environment & Heritage Service, Biodiversity Unit on 028 9056 9605

For CITES enquiries:

Wildlife Licensing and Registration
Service
Global Wildlife Division
**Department for Environment,
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For rabies quarantine enquiries:

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