

Animals of the World: Mammals

THE WOLF

Wolves are the largest canines in the animal kingdom. They live in groups and communicate with howls.

They are able to adapt to extreme climates, even temperatures below zero. They inhabit regions of the northern hemisphere. Currently, most wolves live in the icy areas of Alaska and Canada, far from away from any human population.

There are two species of wolves recognized by biologists who study this kind of mammal. The best known one is the gray wolf; their fur can be a variety of colors, ranging from intense black to bright white, depending on its habitat. The other species is the red wolf, which is often confused with the fox because of its reddish coat and smaller size.



The size and weight of wolves varies greatly depending on where they live and the amount of food they eat. Generally, an adult wolf can weigh between 30 to 80 kilograms, and can be between 60 to 90 meters high. A small wolf has the same build as a German shepherd dog.

A distinctive characteristic of wolves is that they live in groups called packs. The packs are families of between 6 to 20 wolves. Packs are a hierarchical society; they are led by a pair of breeding wolves.

Wolves are carnivorous animals. Living in packs facilitates the hunting of large prey, like moose or deer. Its hunting strategy is to chase and ambush the easiest, weakest prey it finds.



Despite having a threatening appearance, wolves are not aggressive animals. They are territorial animals, watching and protecting their own territory where they live, hunt, and reproduce. Wolves will fight against other animals, including other wolves, to protect their own territory and

the rest of the pack.

The life expectancy of wild wolves is six to eight years; however, in captivity, they can live up to fifteen years.

Wolves mate once a year, usually in late winter or early spring. The pregnancy lasts about 63 days and she can have a litter of 6 puppies. Wolf cubs weigh about half a kilogram at birth, are blind and deaf, and depend on their mother completely. However, this changes quickly. After two weeks, their eyes are open and by the next week, they leave the burrow to explore the world around them. By the time they are 6 months, they are about the size of an adult wolf.



their way of communicating over long distances.

Wolves communicate with howls to reveal the position of the breeding pair or where the nearest prey is. It is believed that wolves howl at the full moon, but it is just



Name _____ Date _____

THE WOLF

Answer the questions.

1. Circle all the canines from the list below.

- a. Dogs
- b. Snakes
- c. Wolves
- d. Beetles
- e. Giraffes
- f. Coyotes



2. Wolves inhabit _____

- a. desert regions.
- b. the beach.
- c. places with cold climates.
- d. zoos and safaris around the world.



3. A distinctive characteristic of wolves is that they live in packs.

- a. True
- b. False

4. From the text, it can be understood that the fur of wolves _____

- a. helps them hide from their predators.
- b. is brightly colored to draw attention to its predators.
- c. changes color depending on how tired they are.
- d. is always red.



5. Wolves are organized _____

- a. in egalitarian societies of power.
- b. in hierarchical societies.
- c. in family societies, where the young have power.
- d. in authoritarian societies, where the weakest wolves lead the pack.

Name _____

Date _____

6. Considering the height and weight of a wolf, number the following animals from largest to smallest.

- ___ Elephant
- ___ Mosquito
- ___ Wolf
- ___ Frog
- ___ Cat



7. Wolves live in packs which facilitates their hunt for the weakest prey.

- a. True
- b. False

8. Wolves are territorial animals _____

- a. that protect their space because they hunt and reproduce in it.
- b. but allow other animals to enter their territory without any problem.
- c. but move to other places if the young want to.
- d. during gestation, but leave it after the birth of its young.

9. According to the text, wolves have shorter gestations than human beings.

- a. True
- b. False

10. Wolves howl to _____

- a. scare their prey.
- b. hunt for prey.
- c. communicate the position of the leaders.
- d. call to the full moon.

