Wolves

The wolf is a large predator of the Canidae family. They are the ancestors of all breeds of domestic (pet) dogs. They are part of a group of animals called the wild dogs. They come from the same group as the dingo and coyote.

Big Facts





- Wolves are fast runners. They can reach speeds of 40 mph to chase prey.
- Wolves are amazing hunters.
- Wolves live and hunt in groups called packs, usually up to 20 wolves and with one breeding pair.
- Adult wolves have large feet with paw prints of nearly 13cm long and 10cm wide.
- Most wolves weigh about 40kg. The heaviest wolf ever recorded weighed over 80kg!
- Wolf pups are born blind and deaf.
- They have a very keen sense of smell and hearing.

Where do they live?

The grey wolf is native to the wilderness and remote areas of Europe, Asia and North America. Wild red wolves only live in the United States of America. Wolves have been found living in more places in the world than any other mammal, except humans. They can live in a variety of habitats including woodlands,

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grasslands, forests and deserts. They can also survive in very cold and hot temperatures, from -50°C to 40°C!

What do they eat?

Wolves are carnivores. Wolves that hunt alone catch small animals like rabbits, hares, squirrels, chipmunks and beavers. But a pack of wolves can catch very big animals such as moose, caribou and elk. When hunting as a pack, the alpha pair (top leaders) always eat first. Wolves can eat around 9kg of food in one meal – about the same as 80 burgers! They also eat small amounts of fruit and berries when they are in season. Arctic wolves in particular have to travel very far to hunt for food, sometimes having to go for days without any food.

Similarities and Differences

There are two well-known species in the world, the red wolf and the grey wolf (known as the gray wolf, timber wolf or western wolf). There is a debate whether the Ethiopian wolf is a third species. Red wolves are smaller than most grey wolves and have pointier faces. The red wolf's howl is more screechy and higher in pitch than the grey wolf's howl. Wild red wolves are an endangered species, but only some types of grey wolves are. There are five subspecies of the grey wolf including the Mexican wolf and Arctic wolf. Arctic wolves are white and so blend in with snow in their natural habitat. Wolves may look similar to dogs, especially breeds such as German Shepherds, but they think and act in very different ways. Wolves have a long muzzle, large head with rounded ears, golden yellow eyes, thick fur coat and powerful jaw. They are usually black, white or grey but can also be red, brown and grey-brown.



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Questions about Wolves

Answer the questions below in full sentences.

1. What is the link between wolves, domestic dogs, dingoes and coyotes?

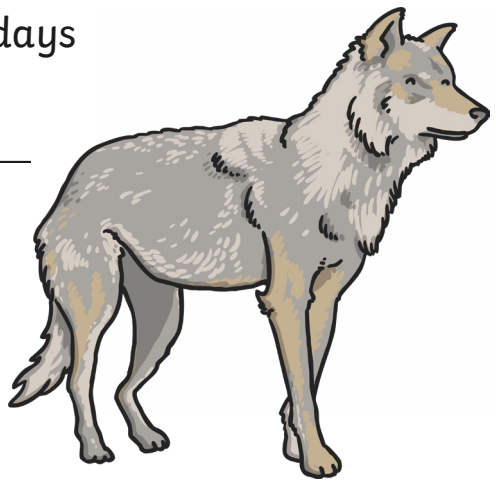
2. Name three of the wolf's skills.

3. How heavy are most wolves and how big are their feet?

4. Which are the wolf's habitats and what temperatures can they survive in?

5. How much food can a wolf eat in one go?

6. Why would Arctic wolves possibly have to go days without food?



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7. What are the different species of wolf called and what is the debate about?

8. Explain three differences between the grey and red wolf.

9. Describe wolves using three adjectives.

10. Are wolves an endangered species?

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Questions about Wolves **Answers**

1. What is the link between wolves, domestic dogs, dingoes and coyotes?

   Wolves are the ancestors of all breeds of domestic (pet) dogs. They come from the same group as the dingo and coyote.

2. Name three of the wolf's skills.

   Wolves are fast runners, amazing hunters and have a keen sense of smell and hearing. (Accept any three)

3. How heavy are most wolves and how big are their feet?

   Most wolves weigh about 40kg. They have paw prints of nearly 13cm long and 10cm wide.

4. Which are the wolf's habitats and what temperatures can they survive in?

   They can live in a variety of habitats including woodlands, grasslands, forests and deserts. They can also survive in very cold and hot temperatures, from –50°C to 40°C!

5. How much food can a wolf eat in one go?

   Wolves can eat around 9kg of food in one meal.

6. Why would Arctic wolves possibly have to go days without food?

   Because Arctic wolves in particular have to travel very far to hunt for food.

7. What are the different species of wolf called and what is the debate about?

   There are two well-known species in the world, the red wolf and the grey wolf (known as the gray wolf, timber wolf or western wolf). There is a debate whether the Ethiopian wolf is a third species.

8. Explain three differences between the grey and red wolf.

   Red wolves are smaller than most grey wolves and have pointier faces. The red wolf's howl is more screechy and higher in pitch than the grey wolf's howl.

9. Describe wolves using three adjectives.

   (Answers will vary, accept any three reasonable adjectives) E.g. Wolves can be powerful, grey and fast.

10. Are wolves an endangered species?

    Wild red wolves are an endangered species, but only some types of grey wolves are.