

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0663/04  
by Samuli Pohjamo (ELDR)  
to the Commission

Subject: Measures against concentrations of wolves in Finland

Finnish Members of the European Parliament are increasingly being contacted because the danger posed by wolves in Finland has grown. In areas bordered by small bodies of water, concentrations of wolves have grown to such an extent that some people are even in a state of panic. There are clear indications that numbers of wolves are increasing and that wolves are spreading into quite new areas.

The wolf stock in Finland forms part of a single stock with its counterpart in Russia, and if one bears this in mind, the total population could be as large as 10 000. The biggest problems in Finland exist in certain regions close to the eastern border: for example in Northern Karelia it has been proven that there are dozens of wolves living close to human habitations. In the Ruokolahti area there is a new concentration, which is preventing the holding of the traditional hunting dog championships there. Further north, the increase in the number of large predators will soon put an end to reindeer farming, which is a traditional source of livelihood there.

The view of local residents is that the existing blanket protection of wolves provided for by EU rules is creating an impossible state of affairs. In order to make it possible to issue hunting licences in 'exceptional cases' on account of the increase in numbers of wolves, it is necessary to have demonstrable proof of problems over a long period. People are wondering how many good elkhounds have to be lost first and whether a child has to die on the way to school before anything can be done about the situation. In a situation where people are in a state of panic, it is not enough for hunting licences to be granted only for the killing of 'problem individuals'. The wolf stock ought to be controlled in such a way that wolves do not come into people's yards and gardens or impinge on routes between homes and schools causing fear and real danger.

At present, unfortunately, it seems that decisions are made on the basis of information which is years old and using only information supplied by environmental organisations, while the threat of legal action hangs over the national authorities. Such a policy does not help people who are constantly confronted by wolves.

I have studied the Commission's answer to question P-4034/03<sup>1</sup>, but would appreciate further clarification concerning it. What will the Commission do to ensure that the authorities are able - and dare - to react quickly to a situation, inter alia by issuing hunting licences as needs dictate?

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C