

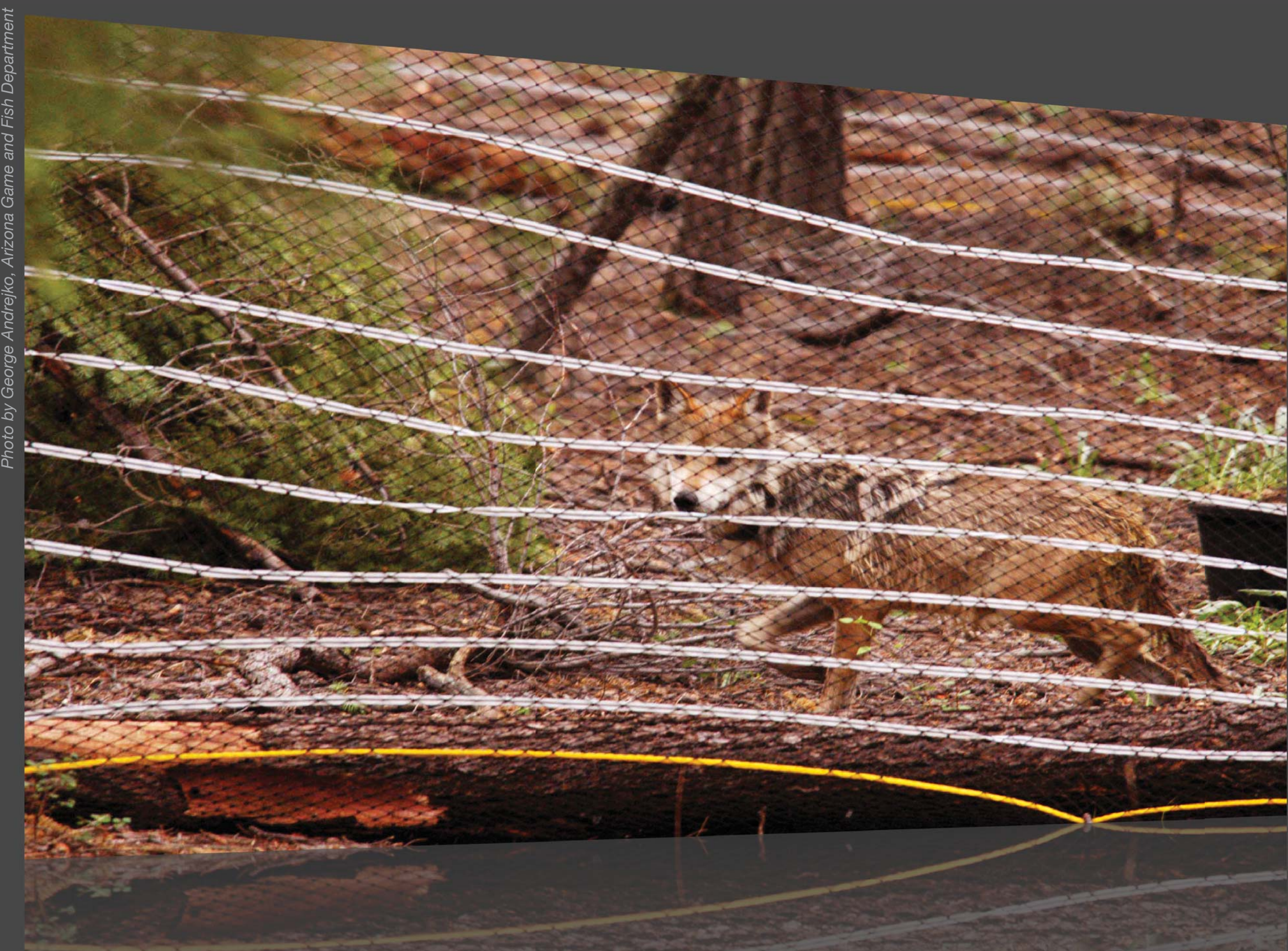
# Balancing Act

Wolves deemed eligible are released in the Primary Recovery Zone within the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area. After release, biologists continue to closely monitor the wolves. All adult-sized wolves are fitted with radio collars before they are released. In addition, biologists place radio collars on some wild-born wolves that are captured after reaching adulthood. Biologists use radio signals emitted from the collars to track and record the wolves' movements. This helps biologists monitor the wolves, including identifying denning locations to monitor reproduction, monitoring the movements of packs, and tracking locations of specific wolves when suspected depredation occurs.

Managing reintroduced Mexican wolves is a continual balancing act between increasing the number of wolves and protecting the interests of people.

There were no wild Mexican wolves in the United States when the Species Survival Plan was implemented in 1977. To begin the breeding program, five wild wolves were captured in Mexico and two genetically suitable wolves were located in captivity. All seven were taken into the captive breeding program and are the “founders” of the current Mexican gray wolf population.

*Program biologists use mules to transport wolves to release sites in roadless areas.*



Wolves that injure or kill livestock three times within a 365-day period are removed from the wild. Removal methods are guided by Standard Operating Procedures and include either relocation to another part of the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area or permanent removal (permanently returned to captivity or euthanized). Since the reintroduction of wolves in 1998 through March 2007, 52 wolves have been removed after killing livestock.



Other than contact to monitor health, human contact with wolves is limited at the pre-release facilities. Wolves are evaluated and selected for release based on genetic makeup, reproductive performance, behavior, health, and overall response to the adaptation process. The genetic makeup of each Mexican gray wolf is documented in a “stud book” to ensure the population represents a healthy genetic mix.



The captive breeding program consists of more than 300 wolves in 47 facilities across the U.S. and Mexico. The program is the only source of Mexican wolves available to re-establish the population in the United States. Wolves identified for potential release are first sent to one of three pre-release sites: Sevilleta (shown above) and Ladder Ranch Wolf Management Facilities in New Mexico and Wolf Haven International in Washington state.