

# Diet

The studies on wolf diet clearly indicate that wild ungulates, including red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) are its main food source. The studies on wolf diet in Poland has shown that both, prey species composition and their percentage, vary widely depending on habitat as well as availability and density of certain prey species in certain part of the year (Jędrzejewski et al. 2012). Stark regional differences in wolf diet were noted.

The wolves from north-eastern Poland prefer red deer, roe deer, wild boar, beaver (*Castor fiber*) and elk (*Alces alces*) (Jędrzejewski et al. 2012). The diet of the wolves from western Poland was similar with roe deer, wild boar, red deer, hare (*Lepus europaeus*) and beaver (Nowak et al. 2011). In the diet of the wolves from eastern Poland (Lublin area) roe deer was dominant while the individuals from south-eastern Poland (the Carpathians) were specialized in hunting red deer. Wolves supplement their diet with small species, occasionally they feed on carrion. The share of livestock in wolf diet in Poland is small (Nowak et al. 2011, Jędrzejewski et al. 2012).

The whole wolf pack participates in a hunt. Large family groups tend to choose large prey. Hunting success depends on weather conditions as well as on the condition of the potential prey. Wolves can chase their prey with a speed of 60 km/h for a dozen minutes or so, however not every attempt is successful. Wolves optimize the energy spent on hunting by choosing prey that is easiest to catch, usually old, ill or young individuals. If hunting deer, wolves search for fauns and females while when they hunt boars, they choose piglets. After a successful hunt wolves start prey consumption in due order which reflects the group hierarchy (Wierzbowska 2010).