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Wolf kill:
Will it
exceed
quota?By Jim Servi
Contributing Writer

Madison — As of Nov. 18, there had been 142 wolves registered by trappers and hunters, animals that count against the 2014 statewide quota of 150 animals.

Four of the six wolf zones were shut down within days of the Oct. 15 season opener. Of the two zones that remained open Nov. 18, 13 wolves could still be killed in Zone 3 and eight wolves could still be killed in Zone 6. That's a total of 21 wolves yet to be harvested — not the eight remaining in the statewide quota.

That's because the earlier harvest went four wolves over the quota in Zone 1, and 14 wolves over the quota in Zone 2.

The situation has created a quandary for Cathy Stepp, the DNR secretary, and her crew. On the one hand, the DNR could close the season after eight more wolves are killed, regardless of whether they come from Zone 3 or Zone 6. This would leave a harvest shortfall in one or both of those zones. On the other hand, the DNR could let the wolf harvest continue to the established quota in both Zone 3 and Zone 6, meaning the state harvest could exceed the 150 quota by as many as 13 wolves.

According to Dave

(See Wolf Harvest Page 52)

Wolf Harvest —

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MacFarland, the DNR's large canine biologist, the DNR is aware of the possible overage.

"The season is not necessarily closed when it gets to 150 wolves," MacFarland said. "We are watching the season closely and taking everything into consideration, but the final word comes from the secretary's (Stepp's) office."

The harvest, by zone, as of Nov. 18 stood at: Zone 1, 36 (quota 32); Zone 2, 29 (quota 15); Zone 3, 27 (quota 40); Zone 4, five (quota 8); Zone 5, 18 (quota 20); Zone 6, 27 (quota 35).

As expected, the harvest has slowed and shifted to the remaining two zones that are still open — zones 3 and 6.

Despite the slowdown, Adam Bernarde successfully trapped an 80-pound wolf just outside of Birnamwood in eastern Marathon County in Zone 6 during the first week of November. Zone 6 has already remained open longer than last year, when it closed Nov. 7, 2013, with early snowfall and low temperatures as potential factors.

Mike Brust, Wisconsin Bowhunters Association president, said, "A more likely reason is that more quota was allocated to Zone 6 this year, as it should have been, because we are trying to control the spread of

Rhinlander, said any number of things can cause the DNR to lose track of a collar, including collar failure, dead batteries, illegal harvest, and dispersing wolves that leave the area.

"There are quite a few 'missing' wolves that fit into this category," Libal said. "However, many of them probably have just had the batteries die."

On the standard VHF collars the DNR most often uses — the kind that emits a specific frequency so an aircraft or staff on the ground can home in on the collar — battery life ranges from four to seven years, depending on how recently the collar was made, Libal said.

wolves into those agricultural and populated areas."

In other words, last year a quota of 30 wolves in Zone 6 — out of the total 251 wolves — made up 12 percent of the 2013 wolf harvest. This year, that number almost doubled to 23 percent of the potential total harvest with a quota of 35 wolves in Zone 6.

Brust said the problem with this is that the increased quota in Zone 6 took away from quotas in other zones, such as Zone 2, where wolf numbers are much higher. Brust said more harvest also is needed in the northern zones, even though they are more ideally suited for wolves. Lower quotas in the northern zones, compared with 2013, caused those zones to close shortly after the opener with some zones exceeding the quota.

No collared wolves had been registered as of Nov. 18, despite the fact that the DNR routinely monitors 30 to 40 wolves that wear working collars. There are a number of wolves with collars that no longer work.

MacFarland said there is a reason that collared wolves don't typically show up in the harvest.

"Younger wolves are more likely to be harvested, with 50 percent (of the harvest) being young-of-the-year and another 25 percent being yearlings. We typically collar adult animals," MacFarland said.

Currently, 36 wolves wear working collars. DNR wildlife biologist Nathan Libal, of

"We are now also experimenting with more advanced GPS collars, which not only emit a specific frequency so we can find the collar, but also take a GPS location and send us the data via satellites in real time twice a day," Libal said. "The greater energy usage of these collars means they will typically last only three years."

Wolves sometimes reside in more than one county, but here's where the DNR considers the main home range to be for the 36 currently still on the air: Five each in Douglas and Price counties; four in Ashland County; three each in Vilas, Oneida, and Bayfield; two each in Sawyer, Jackson, and Eau Claire; and one collared wolf each in Wood, Adams, Iron, Florence, Polk, Forest, and Lincoln counties.

Kevin Naze contributed to this report.