



Tracking the Pack

Center Wolves Check Out in Excellent Health

by Lori Schmidt, Wolf Curator

The ambassador wolf pack is the centerpiece of the International Wolf Center's educational facility in Ely. It is important to Center staff that we maintain the wolves in their best physical condition. To meet that goal, wolf care staff check the wolves daily for any signs of illness, injury,

or ectoparasites, such as ticks. In addition, the pack underwent a thorough physical exam on April 20, 2001, as required by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Veterinary Care Plan.

The plan calls for a complete physical exam, including extensive blood work, physical measurements and dental inspection. This intensive exam requires drugging the wolves to reduce their stress levels and keep them from injuring themselves or staff during the exam. Since there is always risk associated with anesthesia, we perform the

complete medical exam on an as-needed basis, with a minimum of three years between medical exams.

Mackenzie, Lucas, and Lakota turned eight in April of this year and had two previous medical exams on April 27, 1995 and September 25, 1998. Mackenzie had emergency medical treatment on May 11, 2000 to remove foreign debris from her left eye, likely a result of an intensive chase through the wooded enclosure. The newest additions to the ambassador pack, Shadow and Malik, turned one in May of this year, and were included in this year's medical exam.

The exam in April followed a detailed plan written to ensure that each

wolf had the necessary care or tests. Dr. Chip Hanson, the Center's lead veterinarian, directed the exam and was assisted by Dr. Larry Anderson, a veterinarian and International Wolf Center board member, as well as nine other International Wolf Center staff, board members and volunteers. In addition to the routine exam, the older pack members' hips were evaluated (including X-rays), Malik and Shadow were neutered, Lucas had a tissue biopsy to determine a cause of the pigmentation loss on his nose, and Mackenzie had a small fatty cyst on her abdomen inspected.

The exam went extremely well and revealed that all the wolves are in excellent physical condition. The Center's veterinarians are still testing the cause of Lucas' pigmentation loss, but since the exam, he has completely regained the coloration on his nose. Mackenzie's cyst was benign, had no indication of growth or change, and did not require surgery.

Our thanks to everyone who donated time or money to the medical exams, especially Shannon Stehman (a former Wolf Center nanny) and the Twin Spruce Foundation. ■



Above: Dr. Chip Hanson and Dr. Larry Anderson draw blood from Malik.

Right: Dr. Larry Anderson (left), Paul Frame, Center volunteer (middle), and Liz Harper, Information Specialist (right), take measurements of Lakota.



International Wolf Center