

My name is Ashleigh Calaway. I am a wife, mother, and farmer from central Wisconsin. I am writing today to share the realities that families like mine face due to unchecked wolf populations and to respectfully request your attention to this urgent matter.

Like many other farmers, I have experienced the devastating impacts of wolf attacks on our family farm. I had heard of such attacks in the Northwoods of Wisconsin, but I never imagined that one day, it would happen to us.

It was a hot summer night when it all began. For the first time in weeks, my in-laws had the air conditioning on, and we all enjoyed a rare reprieve from the heat after a long day of haymaking. The next morning, however, our nightmare unfolded. My father-in-law, performing his routine check on our flock of sheep, found them slaughtered. What we witnessed was horrifying: animals chased mercilessly around the pasture, killed one by one. Some were taken down with a single strike, others mutilated and scattered across the field. I remember seeing nothing left of some but a leg, a ribcage, or a head. Of the entire flock, only one survived.

In that single night, thirty years of our family's dedication, genetics, and hard work were wiped away. The images from that morning are seared into my memory.

Unfortunately, that was not the end of our encounters. Just last winter, while walking my dog along a blacktop road surrounded by open fields, I realized we were being followed by a wolf. I chose this route specifically to avoid wooded areas, fully aware of the risks. I was carrying a firearm that day, a decision made by sheer instinct and a nudge from a concerned relative. Still, each step of the mile-long walk back to the house was filled with fear. I prayed that I wouldn't have to use my weapon. I feared not only for my life but for my dog's—and for how I would explain to my daughter if her beloved companion never returned home.

Before this incident, I averaged five to ten miles a day walking outdoors. Today, I am lucky to walk three miles on a treadmill. The joy, peace, and mental reset I once found in the simple act of walking outside has been stripped away. Carrying a sidearm should not be a prerequisite to enjoying rural life.

Since that day, I obtained a concealed carry permit, but the constant anxiety lingers. Instead of enjoying nature, I now feel persistent unease, wondering if wolves are watching, learning my patterns, waiting for another opportunity.

The fear and trauma extend beyond myself. I no longer leave the farm without ensuring someone is home to protect our animals. I often pace the house at night, listening for signs of distress from our livestock. My family lives in a heightened state of vigilance, and the toll on our mental health and well-being has been profound.

As a mother, I feel I am failing my daughter. Like so many farm children, she loves the outdoors. Yet, we cannot enjoy basic activities such as playing in the yard, checking fences, or even walking to the school bus without the presence of a firearm. Wolves have been sighted within 100 feet of her playground. Our life sounds more like the Alaskan bush than a traditional Wisconsin farm.

With spring calving season approaching, the tension on our farm is palpable. With fewer wild prey options due to declining deer numbers and previous wolf predation in our area, our newborn calves are at heightened risk. Though we are slowly rebuilding our sheep flock, we still fear putting them back on pasture.

I am not here today asking for the eradication of wolves. I respect their role in the ecosystem. What I am asking for is responsible, science-based management of their population. We need to restore balance—not only for the protection of livestock but for the safety of rural families and the health of our communities.

Farmers should not have to live in fear on their own land. We should be able to walk our pastures, work in our fields, and let our children play outside without the constant threat of predation.

I respectfully urge you to support H.R. 845 – The Pet and Livestock Protection Act, that will allow for a managed wolf hunt in Wisconsin. Our farmers, our families, and our way of life depend on it.