Article 1: http://www.azgfd.gov/i\_e/ee/lessons/wolves/intro.htm

**Wolves: An Uncertain Future?**

When settlers first colonized Arizona, a large contingent of military troops and miners needed food. Merriam’s elk were available in mountain country and readily provided fresh meat. By the early 1900s, elk were extirpated from Arizona. With its major prey base no longer present, and an extremely large cattle population moving westward, wolves turned to what was available—cattle. Of course, that put them at odds with the cattlemen. In the mid-1890s, a devastating drought hit the state, creating significant problems for cattle growers. With little forage for their livestock, and the threat of cattle depredation by wolves, the early ranchers and the federal government began their “war on wolves.” Shortly after the turn of the century, the Mexican wolf had been extirpated from the United States.

In the late 1970s, the federal government decided to bring the Mexican wolf back to America. It hired a trapper to catch some of the last remaining wolves in Mexico. These wolves were moved to a few select zoos around the country and a captive breeding program began. About twenty years later, the captive population was sufficient to begin releasing some into the wild. In the late 1990s, the first wolves in nearly one hundred years walked free in Arizona due, in large part, to a partnership between state, federal, and tribal governments. Much has changed in those hundred years. Habitats have changed. Elk herds have recovered and are, in fact, quite abundant. Attitudes have changed. For many people, instead of the bloodthirsty killer of our fairy tales, the wolf is a majestic creature that symbolizes freedom and nature. However, whether it is a fear of attack or a loss of livelihood, many people still do not feel that wolves should be roaming free in Arizona. They believe the cost is too high.