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Occurrence and Behavior of Wild Dogs in Newly Established Agricultural Areas
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The 1976 Alaska State Legislature initiated a program to make substantial amounts of state land available for agricultural development. Approximately 150,000 acres (60,729 ha) were used for agriculture in Alaska during 1982. The state's goal is to have 500,000 acres (202,429 ha) in agricultural production by 1992. The largest agricultural development to date is the Delta Grain Project which opened approximately 60,000 acres (24,291 ha) of wilderness lands to barley production. Agricultural developments have far reaching impacts on native and feral wildlife. Wild dogs have responded positively to land clearing and the removal of wolves (Canis lupus) from newly settled lands.

A statewide mail survey of biologists, hunting guides, and farmers asking for information about the distribution and abundance of wild and free-ranging dogs indicated that populations of wild dogs may have existed in 26 areas of the state. Eight of the reported wild dog populations were in or adjacent to new agricultural developments.

A population of wild dogs in the Delta Barley Project was intensively studied from 1979 through 1983 by direct observation, radio telemetry and tracking in snow. Packs of 4 to 7 wild dogs were observed foraging and socializing at the Delta Junction garbage dump for periods of 10 to 50 minutes. Pack members were also observed hunting in barley fields and overgrown pastures, along the Delta River and on the right-of-way of the Alaska Oil Pipeline. Five pups and their mother were fitted with radio transmitters at a den near the Delta Junction dump. Wild dogs traveled over areas of 5 to 25 square miles (8 to 40 km2). Sign in snow indicated wild dogs often encountered and marked trails and scent posts of tame dogs, foxes (Vulpes vulpes) coyotes ( ), and occasionally wolves. On 2 occasions wild dogs approached cabins where domestic dogs in heat were penned. The owner of a tame female dog was bitten by a wild male after approaching them while they were tied. Complaints were received of dogs killing domestic sheep and harassing cattle and moose (Aloes aloe). Extreme cold did not appear to effect behavior of wild dogs. Adults and pups were commonly active when temperatures were between -100 and -30oC and on occasion, pups were away from the den when temperatures were below -450C.