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## **Wolf shot after attacks on cattle**

Female's mate killed earlier; others released

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ALBUQUERQUE - A female endangered Mexican gray wolf targeted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for permanent removal from the wild has been killed, according to the agency and the Center for Biological Diversity.

Officials were seeking to remove the male and female that made up the Nantac pack because the animals had been involved in the killing of several cows.

The male was killed in June by the wolf-recovery team under a permanent removal order.

The female was shot Thursday, according to Fish and Wildlife spokeswoman Elizabeth Slown.

The Fish and Wildlife Service began releasing wolves into the wild on the Arizona-New Mexico border in 1998 to re-establish the species in part of its historic range. The agency estimates 32 to 46 of the wolves live in the wild in the two states.

Slown said a male and female, known as the Meridian pack, were released in Southeastern Arizona on Thursday. She said the pair was raised in captivity.

The agency said the Mexican gray wolves are designated as a "nonessential, experimental population." That gives the recovery team greater flexibility to manage the wolves under the Endangered Species Act and allows permanent removal - by capturing or killing - after three confirmed livestock deaths.

But Michael Robinson of the Center for Biological Diversity in Pinos Altos, on the edge of southwestern New Mexico 's Gila Wilderness, said the killing of the Nantac pack was unnecessary. He said the wolves had scavenged on a bull that died from disease and that they then killed four cows.

"If the Fish and Wildlife Service had followed scientists' recommendations to keep wolves from scavenging on carcasses of cows and horses that they did not kill, the Nantac pack would still be roaming the hills of the Gila together today." Slown questioned how the recovery team could prevent the wolves from scavenging since that is part of the animals' nature.

Robinson said the Nantac female had not killed livestock since her mate was shot three weeks ago. Like other wolves that have preyed on cattle and then stopped, Robinson said it's possible the female would not have been involved in any future depredations.