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Mexican gray wolf that had mated with dogs is euthanized

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A Mexican gray wolf runs inside a holding pen at the Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico in a 2009 photo. (Luis Sinco / Los Angeles Times)

By Julie Cart

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service this week ordered the death of a female Mexican gray wolf after the animal was discovered hanging around a group of domestic dogs.

The lone 4-year-old female was shot and killed in New Mexico's Gila National Forest on Wednesday after she was

apparently attracted to domestic dogs at a private residence. The female had earlier this year mated with a dog and given birth to a litter of five hybrid pups. Four of the pups were euthanized and the fifth has not been found.

The five-year Mexican wolf re-introduction program has so far

failed to recover the animals, and more wolves are being held in captive facilities than are free in the wild. Wildlife biologists say that when female wolves fail to find a male wolf as a mate, they pair with domestic dogs, producing wolf-dog hybrids that are usually put down by wildlife authorities.