

NAME _____

DATE _____

If I Were a Wolf

1

December

Reproductive year begins December 1.

Late January/
Early February

The alpha female is ready to breed.

Most often the alpha male and alpha female are the only pair that breeds. However, researchers from the following areas have noted a few exceptions:

Ellesmere Island

Denali National Park

Yellowstone National Park

Native Americans told of this in their legends.

2

Early March

Denning begins.

In preparation for the arrival of her pups, the alpha female will dig a den likely on a rocky slope near a water source.

Multiple dens may be dug. In 1995, alpha 5F, from the Crystal Creek pack, dug five dens across a distance of 12 miles. Pups may be moved if the den becomes infested or if they are disturbed by other animals or humans.

Dens may be used repeatedly over the years.

End of March

Localization begins.

The alpha female remains close by her den while other pack members bring her food.

When the time comes, the alpha female will retire into her den to give birth.

3

Socialization Phase
Pups learn to be responsible members of their pack

April

Pups are born

Average litter = 6
Weight < 1 pound
Eyes are closed.
Ears are closed.
Pups are able to smell.

Pack members work together and bring food to the alpha female.

Two weeks eyes open

Three weeks ears open

Two to three weeks
Pups weigh about 7 pounds.
Pups begin play fighting:
growling, snarling, threatening, biting, etc.
Pups emerge from the den.

Bonding assures pack continuity.

After the pups emerge from the den, pack members begin to wrestle, play, and howl with the pups.

May

Five Weeks
Pups weigh about 13 pounds.
Weaning begins.

Early May/
Mid June

Eight to 10 weeks

Pups are moved to an open area called the rendezvous site where pack members "socialize."

Female pups are notably smaller than male pups.
Female pups can be as small as 15 pounds.
Male pups can be as large as 22 pounds.

August

20 weeks (5 months)
Pups start getting permanent teeth.
Pups get their first coat of winter hair.

Average Life Span is SIX months!

During the first year, many pups are killed by bears, coyotes, cougars, elk, and birds of prey. They are taken by environmental hazards such as cliffs or flood water. Disease and starvation are also a reality.

Wild wolves that survive long enough to celebrate a second birthday are approximately 20% (Jess R. Lee).

4

Juvenile Phase
Pups learn to be functional hunters.

August/
Mid October

Preparing pups to be predators

Pups practice on dead mice captured by adults.
Pups play with wounded mice, squirrels, or rabbits.
Pups start hunting mice in order to hone their skills like stalking, chasing, and pouncing.

Mid October

30 weeks (7 ½ months)

Pups take short trips with pack.
Pack begins teaching pups to hunt small prey.
By now, a male pup may be as large as 80 pounds.

November

32 weeks (8 months)

Pups travel with the pack.
Pups now weigh 30 to 80 pounds.

December/
January

36 weeks (9 months)

Females average 83 pounds.
Males average 95 pounds.

April

First birthday

Females average from 60 to 83 pounds.
Males average from 95 to 100 pounds.

New brothers and sisters