

A petition by LEAL and the National Pro Natura Federation was filed yesterday at the Bolzano Regional Administrative Court to suspend the unlawful culling of the third wolf. The petition follows the filing of a formal appeal against the Province's actions

Bolzano declares war on wolves, the true guardians of the forests. The rest is pure fiction.

A lack of competence in managing nature as a common good, a breach of European regulations, a failure to investigate non-lethal methods, and the absence of genuine prevention measures: this is the recipe adopted by the Provincial Executive led by Arno Kompatscher to declare war on wolves.

The third culling decree signed this year by the Province of Bolzano — concerning the municipalities of Ultimo and Castelbello-Ciardes — cites 22 sheep and 4 goats killed or missing between 15 June and 8 September. Yet the decree itself does not describe any preventative measures adopted in the affected pastures: no electric fencing, no night-time shelter, no guard dogs. The livestock is mainly reared on free-range pastures, with only sporadic monitoring. For the sake of these few animals that were never protected, the Province is sacrificing a species that the whole of Europe is labouring to bring back to life.

The Province's own economy provides the answer to this question: South Tyrol thrives on nature-based tourism, with over 38 million overnight stays in 2025 and an occupancy rate of 73.9 per cent — among the highest in Italy — an economy built on the image of the unspoilt nature of the Dolomites, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Sacrificing that very same wild nature to protect a livestock sector that already receives public subsidies amounting to 40.8 per cent of the market value of every head of livestock taken to the mountain pastures, compared with just 25 per cent of the business income generated, means damaging the sector that truly sustains the local economy in order to protect a minority sector that is already heavily subsidised by the state.

'The solution to the conflict between sheep farming and wolves already exists, and it lies in the application of prevention methods — the associations state — the idea that we must instead resort to firearms is a ploy: by failing to adopt prevention systems and by carrying out unlawful culls, the Province of Bolzano is waging war on its own main economic asset: Nature'.

The ISPRA figures leave no room for doubt: 100 per cent of confirmed wolf attacks in the province of Bolzano between 2015 and 2022 occurred in the absence of prevention measures. In mountain pastures with cattle, only 15.5 per cent were equipped with at least one protective measure — an electric fence, a guard dog or other means — despite the fact that these can be subsidised up to 70 per cent of the cost with funds from the European Union budget, not the Province's. The problem is not the wolf: it is the failure to embrace coexistence, which begins with the use of prevention systems — the very same coexistence that is funded by EU money, which, incidentally, is practically never requested by those engaged in sheep farming in the province.

The wolf is protected by the Habitats Directive and Law 157 of 1992 precisely because its conservation is a shared interest of the Italian State and the European Union, not a decision that a single province can take at will, ignoring mandatory opinions and legal procedures — as in the case of the latest decree, signed without even consulting ISPRA.

It is not just ISPRA's opinion that is missing: Article 16 of the Habitats Directive permits a derogation from the ban on killing wolves only when no other viable solution exists, and requires the authority granting the derogation to document the alternative solutions examined and the reasons for their rejection. **The Bolzano decrees contain no evidence of any investigation into non-lethal methods** — fencing, guard dogs, acoustic or light deterrents, night-time shelters — nor any justification explaining why these were deemed insufficient in this specific case: a requirement of European law that has simply been ignored.

Added to this is what has now become a systematic practice: culling decrees are signed and published just before or during the weekend – the first decree of 2026 was signed on Thursday evening and carried out on Sunday morning, whilst the third was published late on Friday – and the culling takes place within a matter of hours, leaving associations insufficient time to lodge an appeal with the Regional Administrative Court (TAR). This represents a complete failure to adhere to state procedures, which are designed precisely to ensure the participation of citizens and organisations in public life. The Regional Council’s message is clear, almost unspoken yet evident in every line of its decrees: ‘we do as we please’, without oversight and without due process.

Leal and the National Pro Natura Federation — with the support of Green Impact and AGR — have filed an application with the Regional Administrative Court (TAR) for an interim injunction to suspend the culling of the third wolf, and a full-fledged appeal against the Province of Bolzano for its actions regarding the wolf, a collective asset of European interest — precisely to break the pattern that has so far prevented the courts from ruling before the animal was killed.

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Sources

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