

Northwest Territory wolf control planned

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"The Kaminuriaq caribou herd will not recover and cannot

increase in number without either wolf control and control of hunting and probably both," an NWT wildlife service biologist studying caribou herds

said this week.

"It would be foolish to do one without the other."

The population decline of the Kaminuriaq herd, which migrates between Baker Lake and the Manitoba border, has been well documented in recent months.

NWT biologist George Calef said yesterday wolf control is a must if the herd is to be saved.

He said there are two methods of reducing the wolf population — by shooting them from aircraft or by poisoning them.

Calef said he expects either method will draw protest from

environmentalists. He would not comment on which method he would advise.

The basic problem, according to Calef, is that the number of caribou calves surviving to maturity is less than the number being killed by hunters and natural causes.

"The only solution possible is to reduce both natural mortality and hunting," he said.

"The only way to reduce natural mortality is to control wolves, the largest natural predator."

He estimates wolves kill off about five per cent of the herd

each year, a substantial number of which are calves which then never get a chance to reproduce. By controlling wolves, the adult kill will drop and 'recruitment' of calves will increase, he said.

"I think it would be a mistake to totally eliminate the wolves. They're part of the environment. Our job is not just to produce meat, it's to maintain wildlife and wildlife systems," Calef said.

He said controls should be implemented until the herd has a chance to build up to numbers of 100,000 to 150,000 strong.