



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on November 6, 2010

## Wolf Attack! “Without our Horses and Guns We Would Be Dead”

Mark Appleby and Mario Benedict went hunting in their usual spot in the drainage of the South Fork of the Flathead River of Montana on Friday, October 29, 2010. They shot an elk. On Saturday, Mark returned with Raymond Pitman to retrieve the meat. They did not notice anything unusual until their horses became panicked. Turning around to see what was frightening the horses, they found they were surrounded by wolves. Some wolves began closing in.



Raymond drew his pistol and fired one shot in the air while Mark ran for his rifle. Then it became a standoff. Mark and Raymond left the elk quarters at the site and walked their panicked horses the 90-minute hike back to the road.

They returned on Monday with a Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) warden. The warden confirmed one wolf killed, multiple wolf tracks and that the elk meat was eaten by wolves and a grizzly bear.

Mark said had it not been for Raymond wearing his pistol, the wolves would have killed both of them. Though self defense is legal, the problem is the federal government still classifies wolves as an endangered species. So the hunters may have to justify in a federal court their actions to save their own lives. The FWP has turned the information over to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

Mark and Raymond reported that the game has almost disappeared in the last two years because of the increasing wolf population. They also emphasized that without their hunting experience, they would not have been able to defend themselves against the wolves. Mark maintained: "Raymond's pistol saved our lives. It was very ugly."

I asked Mark and Raymond for their advice to the general public going hiking in the forests. They stressed that they would not go into the forest unarmed. They indicated that the general public would have a difficult time deciding when they could claim self defense to justify killing a wolf. Wolves are quick and deadly. Shoot too soon and you pay the federal penalty. Shoot too late and someone else will tell your story.

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*Dr. Berry's [WolfClash.com article](#) also provides the following statements by the two hunters who were attacked by the wolves:*

**Statement of Mark E. Appleby On Wolf Attack of October 30, 2010 to Region One Montana Fish Wildlife And Parks Officer:**

Myself and Mario Benedict went hunting on Friday the 29th of Oct. up Deep Creek Rd. on the east side of Hungry Horse Reservoir. I shot a 6-point bull elk approximately two hours from the truck. I gutted and quartered the elk as Mario [dragged it] up to the road. We then walked back to the truck. As Mario had to work the following day, I got Raymond Pittman to help me get the meat the following morning with my horses.

When we got to the spot in the road where we left the quarters, backstrap tenderloin etc. the day before, we checked to make sure there were no bears, cats, wolves etc. in the area. There were no tracks of anything except a coyote track. We felt safe at that time to relax and eat lunch. Raymond had brought MREs to cook on his little stove.

After about an hour we cut off the legs on the quarters, then re-cinched the saddles on the horses and put the pack panyards on the horses. At that time we took the horses over and tied them up to trees next to the quarters. I then started to pack up a front shoulder and my horse started to get excited, then the other horse did the same. These horses are very used to [the smell of raw] meat, so I didn't know what was going on. I then went to my horse, "Shotgun," and grabbed him by the halter to calm him down. At that point he started blowing and he got worse. He was looking over my head behind me, and at that point I knew something was wrong behind me.

I turned and looked and saw six, seven, or eight wolves and started to run for my rifle that was leaning on a rock on the other side of the road in the direction of the wolves. I was about halfway there and I heard Raymond shoot with his .44 Magnum. When I reached my gun, I picked it up and the wolves had stopped. I pointed my gun at them at about the same time they started to run at us again. At that time I feared for my life and my horses, and my friend [and] started to shoot.

I shot three times at the wolves and they finally fled into the timber. I ran over to the horse named "Starburst." He had wound himself around the tree so tight that his head was [stuck] tight against the tree. I unhooked the rope clasp from the halter and told Raymond to untie the rope and hand it to me as I could barely hang onto the uncontrolled horse.

Once I got the lead rope clipped back onto the halter, Raymond took the horse. I then went for my horse before there was another problem. As I was untying my horse, a lone wolf started to howl, then all of them started to howl. This scared the horses really bad.

I told Raymond to shoot his pistol in the direction of the howling. It stopped them for a few seconds and then they all started howling again. It sounded like maybe seven or eight wolves or more. As the horses [were] spinning around and blowing, I told Raymond to shoot again to shut them up as they were totally scaring the horses out of control. When he did shoot again, they shut up for it seemed 30 seconds to a minute or so. I told Raymond we needed to try and load the meat.

Then they started to howl again and they were closer to us. We couldn't at that point even try to load meat as the horses really started to go berserk. I picked up a backstrap to put into the panyard and Shotgun was out of



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control from the howling and gunshots.

Raymond said, "We need to get the hell out of here!" and I agreed with him as we both feared for our life at this point. I dropped the backstrap and started to follow Raymond down the road as his horse was almost dragging him and mine was doing the same.

We got about 50 to 75 yards down the road when the wolves were howling right next to us on the side of the road. I said, the bastards are following us, maybe trying to kill us or the horses. I told Raymond to shoot into the trees at them as we were trying to get away down the road. And that's what he did.

At that point the horses were totally out of control — damned near dragging us away. For an hour and a half back to the truck it was a rodeo with the horses as they were scared to death, spinning around and trying to look behind them for wolves.

I feel my horses — well, one is mine and one is a friend of mine's horse — anyway I feel they are probably never going to be calm in the woods again, as horses remember things forever.

On another note, I am very [angry]. I lost all my hard-earned elk meat to a pack of damned wolves. I feel fortunate and blessed by God to have gotten out of there with my life, my friend's life and [the] horses' lives. I've been out in the mountains five times in a week and have seen wolves on three of those times, including this attack.

Something needs to change! When Perry Brown and I went back, a grizzly had buried all my meat with the carcass (more misfortune).

*Mark E. Appleby, November 1, 2010*

### **Statement Of Raymond R. Pitman On Wolf Attack of October 30, 2010:**

On Saturday, October 30 I left the house at 6:00 a.m. to go help Mark Appleby get his elk out of the woods. He had shot the elk the day before and needed the horses and some help to get it out.

So, we got to the gate just at daylight and saddled the horses. We rode up as far as we could to a gully that we had to make it through with the horses, and had about a half hour [hike] at that point to the elk.

From there, we walked the horses the rest of the way, keeping an eye out for bears, wolves, mountain lions, etc. There were some old tracks around ... singles, nothing fresh. Nonetheless, we started making noise [so] as to scare anything off.

About 200 yards from the elk, I pulled my revolver in case something noticed us first. We got to the elk, checked out the entire scene to see if anything had been on the quarters, and there was nothing out of place. Mark's hat was still exactly on top of the meat as he had left it. No tracks around to worry about. One coyote track. We checked the carcass from about 50 yards away ... nothing.

We thought everything was safe, so we made lunch on the jet boil. Took a little break for about 30 or 40 minutes, then got back to work cutting the lower legs of the elk. We then laid all the meat out to balance the load on the horses. We then thought to move the horses (after putting on the panyards) closer to the meat, so we tied them up closer.

As we lifted the first piece of meat, the horses started shying violently, with large fiery eyes. I thought to myself, "I thought these horses were used to meat." Mark, though, tried to calm Shotgun (his horse), but instead he was freaking out worse.

Mark turned and started to yell, "Wolves, Raymond!" I turned to see six or seven wolves at 20 yards or less



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coming in on us ... silently! No noise was heard. I pulled my .44 and fired a round up the hill as a warning. They didn't pause at all. So, I started pulling the trigger at the violent, incredibly fast pack of wolves. They were so close and [there were] so many of them. They were all around us from our 3 o'clock to our 9 o'clock [position], coming in for either the horses or the meat or us. We were definitely in a life or death situation.

As I shot the first two or so times, Mark made it to his rifle and started shooting as well ... all within seconds.

After the initial shots were fired, the horses ended up tied up on the tree, wrapped up. We fixed the horses and had them in hand. Mark and I were not able to load any meat as the wolves did not leave! They started howling, first one at about 50 yards, then getting closer, all of them. Again we had to leave ... we had to leave the meat on the ground.

I held my horse in one hand and my .44 in the other. I tried to get packed up from lunch and keep [hold] of the horse while still watching for those wolves to come through the timber again. They wouldn't quit, so we started out of there. They were coming after us again, so I fired up hill again to scare them off, twice. And yet again as we were walking out (being dragged almost) [by the horses], they kept coming. So after about 75 yards again, I had to fire another round into the sky. Then my .44 was out of bullets, so we got the heck out of there, looking over our shoulders the whole way.

God saved us this time, but those wolves are still out there. I won't go in these woods without a sidearm ever again. These wolves were not afraid of us at all. They are killers. If those horses [hadn't warned] us, they would have been on us in three seconds. [That's] the closest I have ever been to being food for a predator.

*Raymond Pitman, November 2, 2010*

*Related article:*

The recent attack on Mark Appleby and Raymond Pitman follows closely on the heels of the deadly wolf attack on Candice Berner, a 32-year-old schoolteacher, who was killed by wolves near Chignik Lake, Alaska. See: [Court Favors Wolves, Endangers Elk, Moose and Humans](#).



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