

Discovery Channel School Video Library for Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley Mathematics



SEGMENT 7: WOLVES

The gray wolf is the only predator in North America dependent on a social order for survival.

The pack leader, called the alpha male, looks his part: ears forward, tail high, patrolling the pack's territory on his own, he wears his leadership proudly.

The alpha wolf determines the hierarchy and every wolf has a place.

The most subordinate wolf in the pack is the omega wolf. Omega wolves are hardly tolerated.

The pack seems to resent this wolf's presence. The animal spends much of its time cowering in submission.

Still, even this lowly and unfortunate role offers greater security than isolation.

At no time is the wolf pack's social structure more evident and perhaps more useful than at mealtimes.

Because food in the wild may be scarce, wolves can consume an enormous amount when it's available. In fact, a wolf may gulp down 20 pounds or more in a single sitting.

At meals, wolf manners are strictly maintained by the alpha male. Watchful pack members keep tails low in submission as if expressing gratitude for a place at the table.

The omega wolf must wait until the other pack members have had their fill before eating.

These harsh but bloodless rules ensure that the strongest wolves survive.

The survival of the fittest dictates mating behavior as well. The Alpha pair are the only animals in the pack to mate, and their pairing lasts for life.