

I'll Always Hate Wolves

In 1966, Outdoor Life magazine received a manuscript from Olive Fredrickson, a lady pioneer living in British Columbia. Soon after, Olive began to work with Outdoor Life Field Editor, Ben East in producing numerous other stories relating Olive's true life experiences. Based on these accounts, a book was published in 1972, titled, The Silence of The North. The following is taken from Chapter, 13, which is titled, I'll Always Hate Wolves.

[T]oward the end of May, I climbed onto one of our horses one morning to ride six miles to an abandoned hay meadow where a man by the name of Jim Fedderly had lived long before. We called it Fedderly's Meadow. Nobody had cut the hay there for many years, and I thought we might cut and stack it to help out with our winter feeding. I left the children at home.

I had ridden about five miles when I pulled my horse up to look at some flowers beside the trail. I decided to climb off and had one foot out of the stirrup when the horse threw up his head, blasted out a frightened snort, and then I heard a strange noise almost like a growl behind me. I looked over my shoulder, and not more than fifteen feet away stood a cow moose, ears flattened back against her neck and her hair all standing up, at the point of lunging for the horse and me. No animal I had ever seen had looked meaner.

The cow lunged, I heaved myself back into the saddle, and the horse jumped so hard he almost threw me off. He didn't quite get clear. The cow clouted him on the hips with her forefeet, hard enough that his hind quarters went almost to the ground, but didn't do him any serious damage. When we were safely out of reach I looked back and could see a newborn moose calf, still wet, lying where the cow had started her rush.

The next day I rode back to the hay meadow to scout out a road into it. I tied Shorty, my horse, where he could graze on bluejoint and sat down at the edge of the timber to rest. Pretty soon I heard a moose snort on the far side of the meadow. I knew that would spook Shorty after what had happened the day before, so I untied him and climbed back into the saddle in a hurry. By that time he was crow-hopping and prancing like a purebred stallion, and when I looked across the meadow again I saw a cow moose and her calf coming running out of the brush, with two big timber wolves after them.

One wolf fooled around in front of the cow, just out of reach of her front feet, and while I watched helplessly the other one went after the calf, hamstringed it with one bite and pulled it down. Then it turned its attention to the cow, diving in and grabbing her by the hinds legs.

My blood was boiling, and I did my best to force Shorty across the meadow to break the nasty affair up, but he'd have none of that. He pranced and waltzed the other way, and I began to shout to scare the wolves off. They ran into the brush, and I rode a circle around the two moose, yelling at the top of my lungs, hoping I could spook those two gray devils out of the neighborhood. Then I hit it for home to get a gun.

I didn't have to urge Shorty. He did his level best the whole way. I suppose he thought the moose and the wolves were all after him.

I drank a glass of milk while the two girls put my saddle on Ben, our other horse. Then I loaded the old Winchester and rode back to Fedderly's Meadow as fast as the fresh horse could go. But I had been gone two hours in all, and I was too late.

I heard the cow moose blow her nose while I was still in the timber. I tied Ben and ran as fast and quietly as I could to the edge of the open, and it's hard to put into words the sight that met my eyes.

The cow was still fighting for her calf, but there wasn't much fight left in her. Her entrails were half torn out. They dragged on the ground as she turned this way and that, trying to trample the wolves with her front feet. But she was too near death to move fast enough. The hamstringed calf still lay off to one side helpless, where I had seen it last.

The cow's hind legs failed, and she went down on her haunches while I was sneaking from tree to tree to get within good fire range. I wanted to be very sure to hitting something when I shot.

When I reached the place I had picked, one wolf was lapping blood at the cow's flank, and the other was actually sitting on her hind quarters, his red tongue lolling out from exertion. I was so furious, while I made the last few yards of my stalk, that I gritted my teeth until they hurt.

I drew a bead on the wolf that was sitting on the moose, and when the gun cracked he flew up in the air as if a bomb had hit him. The shot tore out his whole back just behind the shoulders, and he was dead when he struck the ground.

The second one made a bad mistake. He didn't know where the rifle shot had come from, and he ran straight toward me. I kept my sights on him and let him come until he swerved broadside, two hundred feet away, to streak for the brush. My short cut across his chest, blew a hole in him and broke both front legs. I had to follow his blood trail for four hundred feet through rose brambles and scrub trees. He was still trying to crawl off, but he was almost dead so I let him suffer and saved the one shell I had left for the cow moose. After that was taken care of, I put the calf out of its misery with my belt ax. For a woman who disliked killing things, I had had quite a day. But I never felt the slightest regret where the two wolves were concerned. I made a vow then and there that I would shoot any wolf I laid eyes on the rest of my life if I could.

I still hate wolves. I have seen a lot of their work since, on caribou and deer and other moose, and I am convinced that they kill for fun as well as food. They run and play their victims as renegade dogs do sheep. I have known them to leave a kill, full fed, pull down the next animal they come to, and go on without feeding. If they run across a bunch of deer or caribou, they don't even take time to finish a kill. They pull it down and disable it, and go after another and another until they get tired. If there are one or two old ones in the pack, with poor teeth, they'll stay with the first kill, eat all they want, and then catch up with the rest. Every now and then the pack turns on those decrepit old-timers, too, and tears them to bits.

You don't often catch an old, broken-down timber wolf in a trap, and I doubt one ever dies of old age. I have no use for them, and of all the devilry I have known them to be guilty of, none has ever hunted me down through the years more than the savagery of that pair in Fedderly's Meadow that spring day.