



Livestock Worried by Dogs

We regularly receive calls from farmers, landowners and members of the public reporting farm animals being chased by dogs and in the most serious of cases where sheep in particular have been savaged and killed by dogs or having to be put down by a veterinary surgeon.

The impact this can have on a rural business can be devastating. Not only does the farmer incur expensive veterinary costs to treat or put the livestock to sleep but for pregnant ewes, in particular, there is the risk of aborting their unborn lambs. This can incur further veterinary expense but also the loss of income from a depleted flock cannot be replaced.

This leaflet is for the information of dog's owners, residents, farmers and landowners as to their responsibility around dogs and what happens when livestock are worried by them.

Legislation

Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953

Offence – "if a dog worries livestock on any agricultural land, the owner of the dog, and, if it is the charge of a person other than the owner, that person also shall be guilty of an offence under this Act".

What is 'worrying' – it means attacking livestock or chasing livestock in such a way as may reasonably be expected to cause injury or suffering to the livestock or, in the case of females, abortion, or loss of or diminution in their produce.

Also being at large (that is to say not on a lead or otherwise under close control) in a field or enclosure in which there are sheep.

What is 'livestock' – means cattle, sheep, goats, swine, horses or poultry and for the purposes of this Act 'cattle' means bulls, cows, oxen, heifers or calves, 'horses' includes asses and mules and 'poultry' means domestic fowls, turkeys geese or ducks.

What is 'agricultural land' – means land used as arable, meadow or grazing land, or used for the purposes of poultry farming, pig farming, market gardens, allotments, nursery grounds or orchards.

This legislation does not apply to a dog owned by or in charge of the occupier of the field or enclosure of the owner of the sheep or a person authorised by either of those persons. Neither does it apply to a police dog, a guide dog, trained sheep dog, a working gun dog or a pack of hounds.

Penalty – Maximum fine £1,000.





The Animals Act 1971

Section 9 of the Animals Act 1971 provides that the owner of livestock, the landowner or anyone acting on their behalf, is entitled to shoot any dog if they believe it is the only reasonable way of stopping it worrying livestock. Such action must be reported to the local Police within 48 hours.

Dog Owners

If you are walking your dog in the countryside:

- Do not allow your dog to enter a field on its own and keep it under your control at all times.
- Keep your dog on a lead when crossing through fields that contain livestock. However, don't hang onto your dog if you are threatened by cattle, let it go as the cattle will chase the dog.
- Stick to public right of ways.

When at home:

- Make sure you know where your dog is at all times.
- Ensure that your property is secure and that your dog cannot escape day or night.

If you know your dog has previously chased or attacked sheep then take responsible measures to prevent it happening again.

Farmers / Landowners / Livestock owners

- Dial 101 or email contact@gwent.pnn.polie.uk to report incidents of livestock worrying to Gwent Police.
- Take photographs of injuries to the livestock.
- If you are able to, secure the dog until the Police arrive so that evidence can be gathered to identify the owner of the dog.
- Put signs up on gateways alerting dog walkers to the presence of livestock in the fields.
- If sufficient evidence is available the Police can prosecute the dog owner on your behalf.
- Compensation for damage caused is a civil matter between you and the dog owner.
- If you shoot a dog using the criteria under the Animals Act 1971 then ensure you notify the Police within 48 hours.

