

## Contacting the police

### Dial 999

Dogs worrying livestock is considered an emergency if it is taking place at the time and there is, or likely to be serious damage to livestock, so dial 999. Ask for the police and explain to the operator that there is a dog attacking livestock. To enable your call to be correctly graded, please stress to the operator that there either has been, or will be serious damage to your livestock.

Provide an accurate location and in remote areas please try to provide both OS grid co-ordinates and the location of the nearest road and point of interest. If possible, arrange to meet officers to guide them to the location.

### Dial 101

If livestock has been attacked and the dogs have left the location, please use the 101 service. Ask for the relevant police force and explain to the operator what has happened. The operator will give you advice and explain how the force will handle your report.

If you are reporting intelligence on poorly controlled dogs, dogs regularly trespassing on farm land, escaping or being allowed to roam freely – then please either report to the local police via the 101 service or email your local force through the address on their website. Photographs and video footage can be attached to email reports.

### What service should you expect from the police?

The police will investigate your report of crime – this may be over the phone or by sending officers depending on the circumstances.

If your report is being handled as an emergency you will be informed of this and officers will be dispatched to the location to identify the dog(s) and owner and investigate the offence.

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This leaflet is for guidance only.  
For full legislation please refer to:

- The dogs (protection of livestock) act 1953
- The animals act 1971

# Livestock worrying

A guide for farmers  
and landowners  
on the law and how  
to report to your  
local police

## What is livestock worrying?

A person who owns, or is in charge of a dog which worries livestock on any agricultural land commits the offence of livestock worrying.

The term 'worrying' means:

- attacking livestock;
- chasing livestock in such a way as may be reasonably expected to cause injury or suffering; in the case of ewes, this includes abortion or loss or reduction in the number of offspring;
- not having a dog on a lead or under close control when close by, or in a field or enclosure with livestock.

Dogs which do not need to be on a lead include:

- those owned by, or in the charge of the occupier of the land, the owner of the sheep or a person authorised by these people;
- a police dog;
- a guide dog for the blind;
- a trained sheep dog\*;
- a working gun dog\* or one of a pack of hounds.

*\*a working dog needs to be clearly working at the time to be exempt.*



### Definitions:

**Agricultural land** includes fields, pig and poultry farms, allotments, nurseries and orchards.

**Livestock** is defined as cattle, sheep, goats, swine, horses or poultry. Cattle means bulls, cows, oxen, heifers or calves and horses include asses and mules. Poultry includes domestic fowls, turkeys, geese and ducks.

## What can the farmer do?

The owner of the livestock or the land or any authorised person may kill or injure a dog\* in order to protect the livestock. The dog must be worrying or about to worry the livestock.

There must be:

- no other reasonable means of ending or preventing the worrying; or
- the dog has not left the vicinity and is not under the control of any person and there are no reasonable means of ascertaining ownership.

This does not count if livestock has trespassed onto someone else's land and a dog belonging to the land owner is worrying the livestock. If sheep have been attacked and require treatment, disposal or have lost lambs, then losses can be claimed back from the dog owner through a civil claim.

*\*The law requires this to be reported to the police within 48 hours, but preferably as soon as possible. It is also advisable to contact the dog warden as well. Often the dog warden will be aware of a lost dog and owners can be traced quickly. The dog warden can also scan any shot dogs for a microchip.*



### Exceptions:

Where there is a livestock trespass and a dog belonging, or in the charge of the owner of the land attacks the livestock, then the dog owner has a defence. If the dog is encouraged to attack the livestock, then this defence doesn't stand.

If the dog is in the charge of someone else fit and proper then the dog owner has a defence.

## How can farmers help the police?

**Early warnings:** For police to intervene early and reduce the likelihood of a livestock attack, it is critical that poorly controlled dogs, dogs which are repeatedly escaping, or dogs trespassing from public footpaths are reported to the police.

The police and local authorities have options for enforcing responsible dog ownership and can also offer advice and help to dog owners.

**Report in all cases:** Livestock worrying is a crime and must be reported to the police in all cases.

Data from reported incidents create a picture of where incidents are happening; the police can then put in place prevention initiatives, including targeted educational material and signage.

**Preserve evidence:** Preserve attacked livestock for forensic examination. This can secure key evidence to identify the dogs involved. If it is raining or wet, please cover any carcasses with waterproof material such as tarpaulin, this will enable the police to obtain the best evidence. Take photographs and video (mobiles or a camera) of the attacked livestock, the whole scene as well as detailed close-ups and eartag numbers. If possible, obtain a veterinary examination – expert medical evidence is useful for subsequent prosecutions.

