

# **Dogs attacking sheep**

## **Full Update on the present legal, enforcement and political situation**

Firstly I would like to say a huge thank you to every farmer who sent in a report form to SheepWatch. NOTHING would have changed at all if you had not done this. You are the reason we are now getting support. Please see the end of this document for WHAT NEXT particularly if you live in the Police Force areas of North Wales, North Yorkshire, Sussex, Hertfordshire, Devon and Cornwall

I wanted to update everyone on where we are and to let you know that what, at first, seemed like a very simple problem to solve, has turned out to be one of the most complex situations I have ever encountered. However – it WILL be solved but we need your continued support.

I want to stress – we are doing this to help protect the welfare of sheep, dogs, farmers and the economy. We need to work with everyone and the present situation has no winners.

### **Number of sheep killed by dogs in the UK?**

There is no evidence or collective figure for the number of sheep killed by pet dogs in the UK. No-one records it. It is not the job of the police to record it as it is not reportable to the Home Office (things like burglary and murder are). Not everyone is a member of the NFU or has NFU insurance so their figures are not complete. The Home Office does not hold any Police figures nationally, and Defra focus on disease losses.

**Without figures or statistics there is no evidence that a crime is taking place – so no police focus, no funding from the government can be put in place, and no extra support can be given to the countryside.**

**Sheepwatch UK asked the farmers across the country to fill in a form on the website if they had a sheep attack and you responded in your hundreds! This has provided the first evidence.**



## ***Dogs attacking sheep-update***

What your feedback has so far discovered – some of this you will know from experience but I want to clarify everything so anyone can understand the situation

### **Dogs chasing sheep**

- A sheep can be killed by a dog even if the dog does not bite it. In 2016 116 sheep died from a dog attack and not one single sheep was bitten. They died from crushing and shock, from being chased.
- Unborn lambs can be distressed and die when their mother is chased.
- Many lambs are aborted after sheep have been chased or reabsorbed.
- Sheep suffer long term effects after being attacked with evidence of Post Traumatic Stress.

### **Number of sheep deaths**

- You provided evidence of 2,474 sheep being killed across the country (total sheep 1658, total pregnant 408 - adding a further 816 lives to the total).
- With North Wales Police Force being the only force to systematically record sheep killed by dogs we were able to look at the ratio of what you reported to SheepWatch and compare it to the incidents they have recorded and then scale that up across the country – this gave crude evidence of approximately 15,000 sheep killed annually.
- The highest number of sheep deaths in a single incident was 116 in March in Sussex but there were frequently high numbers being killed
- Month of the highest number of attacks is February followed by Jan and Mar – when sheep are pregnant or just had lambs
- We do not have figures for the number of lambs that were aborted or the number of sheep that died from shock after the incident. We also do not have numbers for the number of sheep injured so badly that they will no longer be able to be mothers – eg torn udder or ripped back end.

### **Number of dogs killed**

- We have learned through your reports that 49 dogs were shot or destroyed for chasing sheep or killing sheep
- This is upsetting for everyone – farmers only shoot dogs to stop more sheep being ripped apart, the farmers love dogs and own dogs too. They only kill one life to save many and sheep have the right to live too.
- Dogs chasing sheep is an animal welfare issue for the dog. If a dog is running loose it is in danger. It can get hit by a car, attack other dogs, can jump up at older people, etc etc. Dogs running loose who are out of control have been let down by their owners.
- It is not the dogs fault but invariably the dog suffers.

Only 57% of farmers bother to report an attack to the police even if a sheep has been killed, over 10% of farmers actively admitting that they did not report it, often because you do not believe action will be taken. **Sheep worrying is a crime and you will find further information at the end of this report about what to expect from the police.**

## ***Dogs attacking sheep-update***

### **YOU WANT CHANGE**

We know you want change but we need to provide the evidence about what is happening so that we get **the right changes** so sheep and dogs are protected properly. After you sent in your forms we have learnt that many preconceived ideas have been challenged.

- Footpaths through fields – ONLY 18% of fields had footpaths where sheep were attacked, 27% of fields where sheep were attacked **did not** have a footpath running through it, and we do not know about the remaining 54%. Of course a dog should be on lead in a field of sheep but this only protects the sheep in 18% of cases – more work needs to be done to find out why the rest are being attacked.
- We know that at least 21% of you had signs up warning of sheep in the field – we now know that signs alone do not always work and education is a key factor. From speaking to walkers we also know that walkers become ‘sign blind’ if they keep going through fields with signs telling them there are sheep but the sheep have since been removed but the sign is still in place – they stop believing the signs.
- We found that only 14% of dogs that attacked sheep were with a walker. 20% were alone and 26% of farmers did not see the dog – the remainder is unknown. This means that ONLY 14% of cases could have been stopped by using a lead.
- Many attacks took place at night by dogs getting out of gardens – rampaging and then going home in the morning.
- 40% of you had stock fence in good condition (only 5% had strands of wire or electric) the remainder is unknown. But this demonstrates that good stock fencing does not stop sheep being attacked. The dogs are jumping the fence or going under the gate.
- Type of dogs. We must focus on ‘dogs’ in general and not demonise breeds. Your evidence shows that whilst some are more common, any breed can attack and kill sheep and any size dog can take part. Many people believe only the big dogs attack sheep. A list of your attackers is in order of high to low records: Husky, Labrador, German Shepherd, Terrier, Alsatian, Lurcher, Staffie, Labx, Collie, Jack Russell, Collie x, Husky x, Patterdale Terrier, Jap Akita, Great Dane, Pointer, Foxhound, Shih zu, Alaskan Mal, Bullmastiff, Lakeland Terrier, Rho Ridgeback, Pit Bull, Border Terrier, Czech Wolfdog. Amazing really!

## *Dogs attacking sheep-update*

# So what happened on March 21<sup>st</sup> 2017

### Meeting at DEFRA

SheepWatchUK met with the police and Tim Morris a rep for DEFRA Animal Health and Welfare Board for England.

The police know that the law is on occasions enough at the moment but we also believe that full new laws are not necessary right now, instead we need evidence to get present laws updated. Getting new laws could take years and years – but updating laws is far more possible and relevant – specifically the 1953 legislation.

North Wales Rural Police Force under the watch of Robert Taylor and PC Dave Allen have collated the first set of data and really careful insight into the effectiveness of the laws and information gathering. A pilot will run using much of the experience they have gathered and the pilot will further discover how effectively the law is working.

**We cannot alter the law until we have evidence of what needs changing.**

### The 5 police forces taking part are:

North Wales, Hertfordshire, Devon and Cornwall, North Yorkshire, and Sussex. This is being led by the National Police Chiefs' Council so is a national initiative

The police are going to do the following as part of the pilot:

- Collect 4 years worth of data going back to September 2013- they are reviewing their records and hunting out details on past attacks. This is a huge task and I would like to thank them for this massive effort.
- This will give them information such as a) if a person reported an attack was it acted on, b) what stopped it going to court – etc etc
- Build on the good practice which has been spearheaded by North Wales force and discover if this can easily be transferred to the other forces- this involves challenges such as retraining of the initial call handler.
- Train officers to use the law to its full capacity
- Discover the gaps in the law once it is used to capacity
- Work to build relationship with farmers so they are confident to report any level of worrying to the police.
- Report back to DEFRA in September 2017.
- Eventually put together a training pack for the police college so there is clarity on how to deal with a sheep attack

The main message from the police to the public is –  
**Use a lead, Secure your boundaries, Know your breed.**

## ***Dogs attacking sheep-update***

### **Meeting at the House of Lords – All-Party Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare**

#### **Livestock worrying and Dog Control**

Special thanks to Lord Trees, Angela Smith MP, Marisa Smith, the 5 police forces, Tom Carter from Sussex Police, Farming organisations, Dog organisations, DEFRA Claire Moriarty the Permanent Sec for support, Andy Howarth from the Welfare Team, and a huge thank you from SheepWatch to Tim Morris for being on the end of the phone at all hours of the day and evening and for support.

#### **Those who attended:**

Chair – Angela Smith MP, Hosted by Lord Trees

Organisations speaking: North Wales Police, NPCC, SheepWatch, NFU, National Sheep Association, Farmers Guardian, CLA, Farmers' Union of Wales, Battersea Dogs Home, Canine and Feline Sector Group, Kennel Club.

**The support for investigation and evidence gathering was unanimous. Everyone recognised that the problem was huge and gave talks to that effect.**

Apart from all the information written here (all info in the pages above came out in the talks), the following statements were very interesting:

**Terena Plowright, Sheepwatch** – farmers need to be properly compensated when animals are injured or killed, this in itself will act as a deterrent.

**Rob Taylor and PC Dave Allen, North Wales Police** – The law as it stands is not allowing police to do their job to stop dogs attacking sheep and thus in turn protect dogs.

**Charles Sercombe NFU** – A big problem is the dogs that escape from gardens. Industry has difficulty getting farmers to report worrying because of previous bad experiences. Evidence is central. His message was that the countryside was open but we need people to be responsible and not kill the livestock.

**Phil Stocker NSA** – The NSA have been doing lots of work engaging farmers to report attacks, trying to encourage dog owners to be responsible, to raise awareness of the situation to the police. He explained that this is a welfare issue, sheep are defenseless and they suffer terrible injuries. 40% of attacks need a vet to attend. He also raised the point that their research has shown that 30% of attacks are linked to depression for farmers.

**Olivia Midgley, Farmers Guardian** – Their research has shown that attacks have risen by 93% and they have tried to help by distributing 70,000 signs.

**Andrew Gillett, CLA** – They are researching how other countries are managing the issue, looking at options for public access land and are also looking at the steps that Scotland have taken.

## ***Dogs attacking sheep-update***

**Dr Hazel Wright, FUW** – Reporting will only increase when there is a positive outcome from doing so. Need real enforcement. Evidence on what is happening on the ground is vital and that will need to come from farmers and police. They have done some work on the average value of a carcass which seems to be £75.

**Claire Horton from AHWBE and Battersea** – Welfare must be top of the agenda and everyone needs to work together to tackle this. It must be about dogs and sheep, not about Breed of dogs.

**Professor Steve Dean, CFSG** – The information so far only informs that there is a problem and we need to look at solutions too. Dogs do need to run free so we must understand that dogs as a whole are at risk of losing their freedom if we do not take this seriously and act accordingly. We need to look at training – even dogs on a lead can be out of control, its just their radius is reduced.

**Steve Jenkinson, Kennel Club Access Advisor** – Need to understand that the lead is only part of the solution as we also need to make sure gardens and places where dogs are kept are secure. Dog walkers actually do not want their dogs to attack sheep and find it very distressing when it happens – they too want a hassle free life and a hassle free walk. Dog walking is one of the top 2 routes to a healthy lifestyle. Councils banning dogs from parks is compounding the problem.

**Lord Trees** – Possible role for legislation change, evidence gathering is crucial.

**Comments from the audience** – Get the problem into TV programmes such as the Archers, funding for education, get social scientists involved to make sure the messages are hitting the chord, farmers are getting really distressed when they go out to their sheep and find them mauled, they are actively avoiding grazing fields which are high risk.

## ***Dogs attacking sheep-update***

### **What next**

1. We need to collect the evidence going back to September 2013 (going backwards speeds it up as we need 4 years of data). If you did not report an attack or any level of sheep worrying (or livestock) worrying to the police – **PLEASE DO IT NOW** by filling in the report form at [www.sheepwatch.co.uk](http://www.sheepwatch.co.uk) (link on the front page). The police cannot act on it now so do not report to them – SheepWatch will join the data together alongside the police to create a full 4 year report. **We only need this if you live in the Police Force areas of North Wales, North Yorkshire, Sussex, Hertfordshire, Devon and Cornwall.**
  2. Know what to do if your sheep get attacked or worried. Go to the front page of the Sheepwatch.co.uk website where all the information is on a leaflet. You can print the leaflet and if a police officer tells you sheep worrying is not a crime, read to him from the leaflet which has National police and DEFRA enforcement.
  3. If you know of any methods which are working which are helping to protect sheep or are warning walkers of sheep nearby or in fields, please let us know [sheepwatchuk@gmail.co.uk](mailto:sheepwatchuk@gmail.co.uk)
  4. If you have a spare £2 please go to the Crowdfunder page and donate some cash so we can get the police information leaflet printed and get some education out to the general public. If every farmer donates £2 we have cracked the funding issue! Education and information gathering is key to solving this problem. Please don't leave it to everyone else to solve the problem. Thanks [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/sheepwatch-uk](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/sheepwatch-uk)
  5. If you are a large company and want to get involved by sponsoring this important project please write to [sheepwatchuk@gmail.com](mailto:sheepwatchuk@gmail.com)
6. **Report ALL future sheep worrying and attacks to the police – it is a crime which should ALWAYS be taken seriously. If you meet obstruction please email me [sheepwatchuk@gmail.com](mailto:sheepwatchuk@gmail.com)**

I personally want to thank everyone who is working with SheepWatch and with the Police, to try and stop this awful suffering for sheep and dogs. If we all work together we can solve this problem. It is a difficult, complex and harrowing problem

For more advice or information please go to [www.sheepwatch.co.uk](http://www.sheepwatch.co.uk)

Thanks

*Terena*

Terena Plowright, SheepwatchUK 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2017