



## National Sheep Association

### Sheep Worrying by Dog Survey (April 2012-April 2013)

101 separate sheep worrying incidents in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

- 75% of attacks were witnessed by somebody, even if it was not the farmer.
- The majority of attacks reported (57%) occurred in private, enclosed field with no footpath and no permitted access for dog walkers; 29% of attacks were in private fields with a footpath and the rest were on common/access land (9.5%) and country parks/nature reserves (4.5%).
- When a farmer was aware of the number of dogs involved, they usually reported just one dog attacking (52% of cases). Occasionally it was two dogs (35% of cases) and although a pack of seven dogs was reported in one incident, more than two dogs was rare (13%).
- 89 reports to NSA included information on how many sheep were injured and killed. This showed a range of 0-72 for injuries and 0-30 for mortalities. Mortalities included sheep put down after the attack due to the severity of their injuries. On average, each attack saw 3.2 sheep injured and four sheep killed.
- 34 farmers were willing to give an approximate cost of the attack to NSA and these ranged from £60-£17,000, giving an average of £1,580 per attack.
- The most common additional problem reported was abortion in early pregnancy, but other issues included:-
  - Prolapses in later pregnancy
  - Injuries causing lambing difficulties
  - Mis-mothering of young lambs
  - Broken fences caused by fleeing sheep
  - Blood causing flystrike
  - Lambs suffering a check to daily liveweight gain
  - Injuries preventing finished lambs being sent to market
- When a farmer was aware of the attack, the owner was present in just under half (45%) of cases. Usually (97%) the owner was local rather than a visitor.
- Where a farmer was aware of what happened to the dog(s) afterwards, 29% were reported as destroyed and 62% of those were legally and regrettably shot by the farmer.



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- Of the cases reported, 77% were not the first incident experienced on the farm. Of those, the number of previous incidents ranged from 1-30 with an average of 3.8 previous attacks.
- Attacks happen throughout the day and night, although slightly more (39%) occurred in the morning than the afternoon (15%), evening (30%) or overnight (20%).
- Nearly half of all attacks reported occurred in winter, with attacks occurring in other months spread evenly between spring, summer and autumn.
- There were very mixed reports of police being very helpful or completely disinterested, depending on the police force and individual responding. Local dog wardens are sometimes of more help, but this was also variable.
- Only six cases reported to NSA have been taken further and prosecution considered. The outcome of four of these is known, with two dog owners ordered to pay costs/compensation and another two dog owners given a formal police caution.
- Private settlements were pursued in 13 cases (some successfully) and an insurance claim made in another 14 cases, but not all farmers are insured for dog worrying and others have concerns about high excess charges (£750 in one case) or hikes in premiums.



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