



NSA Sheep worrying by dogs survey 2023: Main Results





Sheep farmers discouraged by lack of support

- Farmers making huge gains incentivised by government for improved animal health and welfare, alongside delivery of public goods.
- Sheep worrying is out of farmers control but resolution is still unanswered.
- Results show huge frustration that sheep worrying is becoming the 'norm' – not sustainable.
- Despite farmers making steps to prevent sheep worrying (signs), it's not making an impact.





NSA urges for greater legislative support

- 82% of respondents strongly agree additional powers are necessary.
- Nervous about discussions for increased countryside access.
- Increased powers and fines proposed in Kept Animals Bill are welcomed but are they strong enough to act as a deterrent?
- Proposed level of maximum fine inadequate (£1,000 vs £40,000).
- Still feel the **requirement for dogs on a lead in vicinity of sheep** needs to be addressed.
- License / registration scheme for dogs – traceability.





Need action at every entry level:

Increased legislation to allow...

- Increased fines/punishment
- Greater police powers

This needs ALL farmers to report all cases

Should help:

- Raise public awareness
- Encourage responsible dog ownership





NSA urges public to take responsibility

2023 is the 8th survey we have conducted since 2013, with 305 respondents, 79% NSA members.

70% of respondents had a sheep worrying incident, with 95% of these being between 1-10.

In almost 70% of cases it's a single dog injuring or killing multiple sheep.

Still concerns over lack of education and irresponsible dog ownership.

Only 14% respondents were alerted by the offending dog owner, with the majority left to discover the evidence.

Dog walk checklist



National Sheep Association
www.sheepworrying.org.uk
#LeadOn

Lead

Keep your dog on a lead near livestock.
Let go if chased by cattle.

Control

Keep your dog in sight at all times, and place on a lead as soon as you are near livestock.

Signs

Stick to dedicated, marked footpaths and look out for signs indicating where livestock graze.

Bags

Take poo bags with you and pick up your dog's poo. Worms in dog faeces causes devastating disease in livestock.



Any dog can chase or attack sheep. It's not worth the risk.

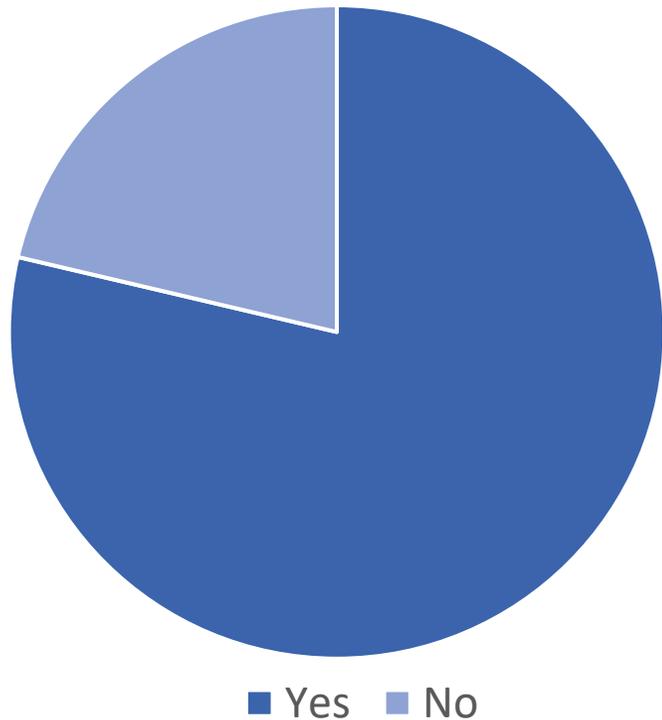




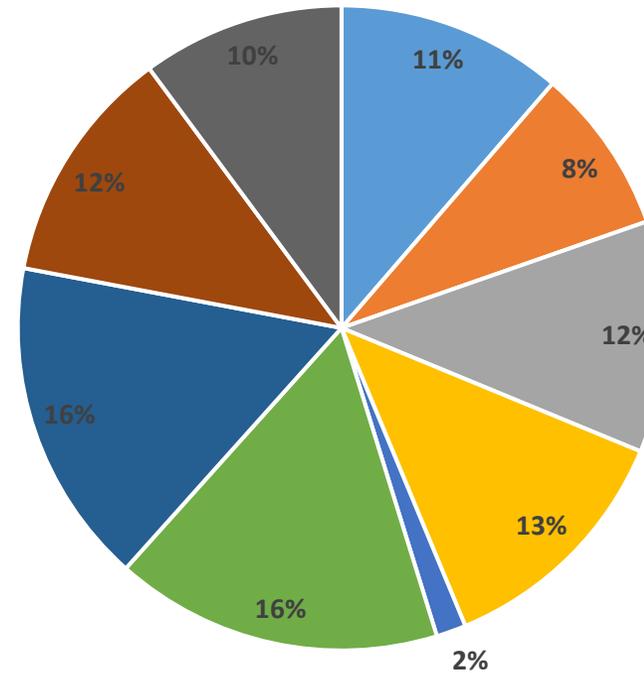
Contributor Profile

305 respondents, 79% NSA members

NSA member



Regional split



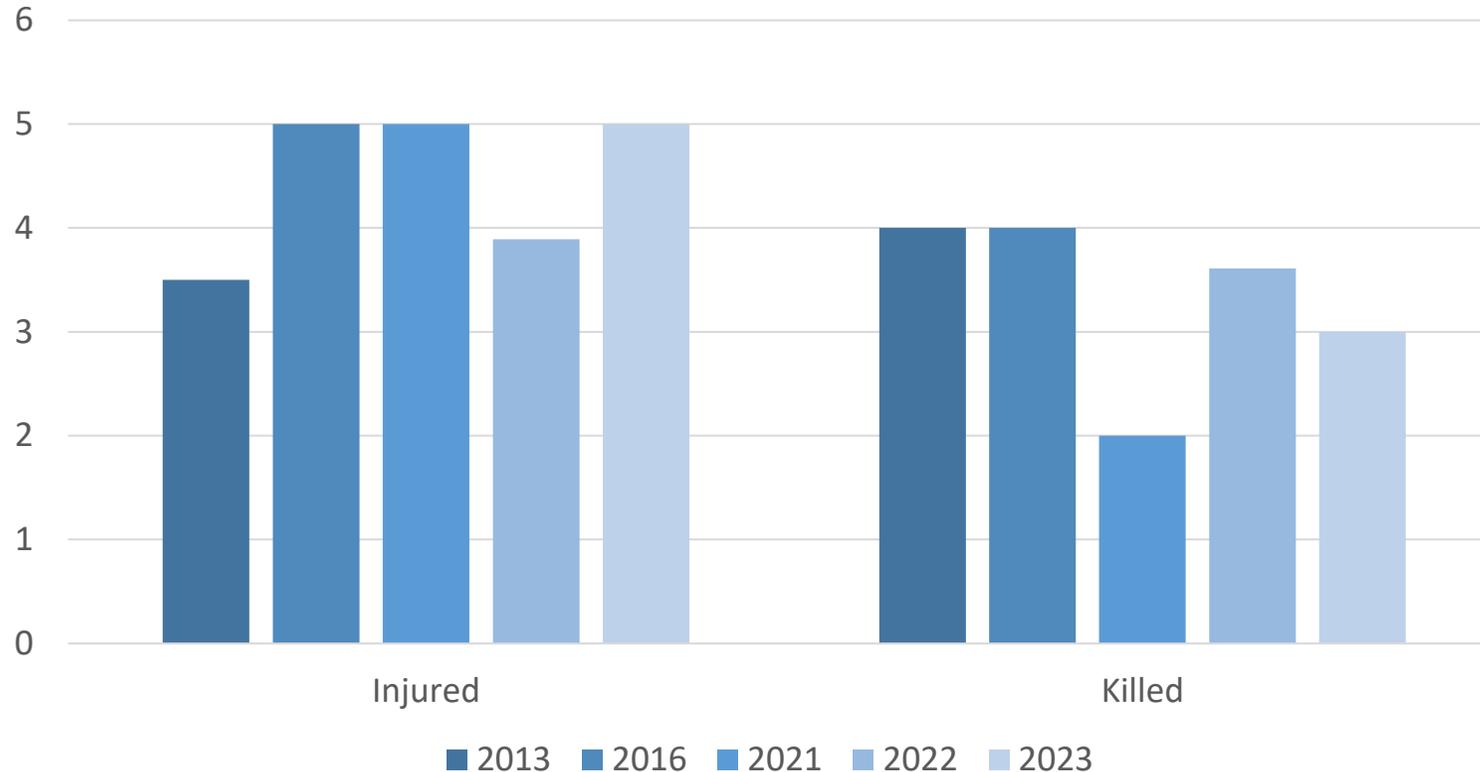
- Central
- Eastern
- Marches
- Northern
- N.Ireland
- Scotland
- S. East
- S. West
- Wales





Incidents and Severity

Average no. per incident



In the last year, on average, how many of your sheep have been injured/killed in a single attack as a result of sheep worrying?

Worryingly, the average number of sheep injured during attacks has increased to the 2020/2016 level.

There has been a slight drop in the number of sheep killed during a sheep worrying incident but this doesn't take into account that 67% of respondents who reported production losses in sheep and/or miscarriage in ewes as a result of sheep worrying.

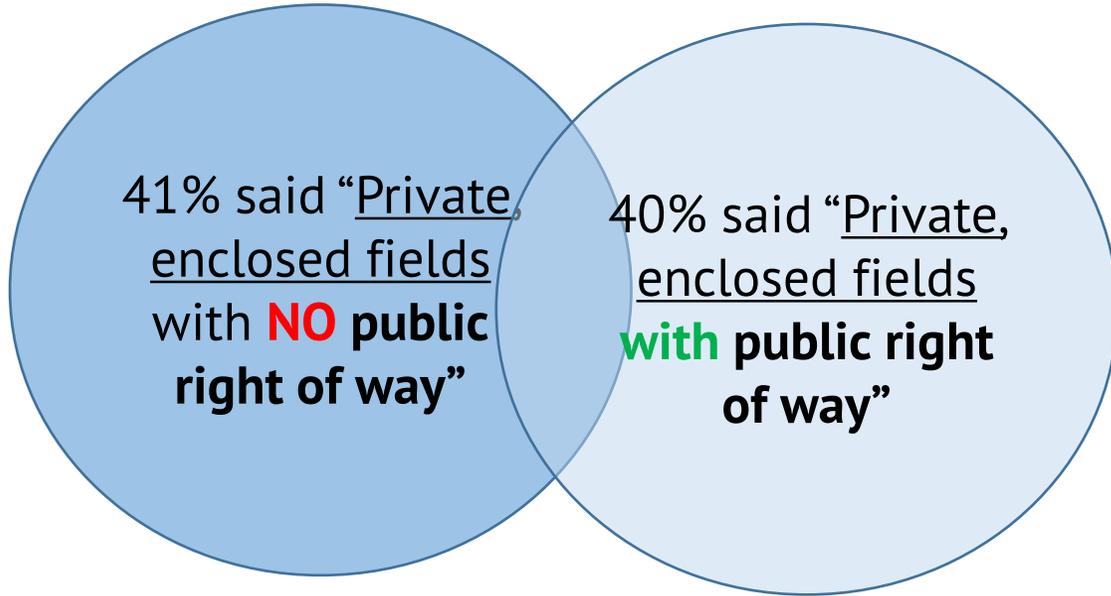
This may be the reason for the slight decrease in the average number of sheep killed as there is a time lag between the sheep worrying event and losses or injuries observed.

Nevertheless, it demonstrates that sheep worrying **remains a problem!**





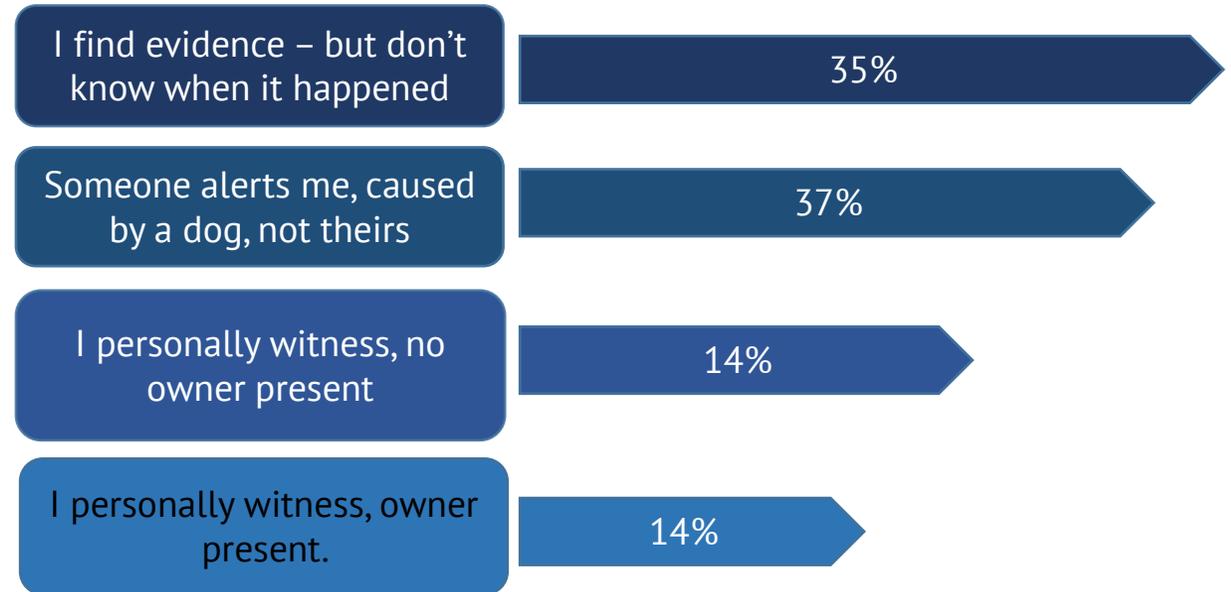
Nature of the incident



Where have you found sheep worrying by dog(s) incidents on your sheep occur?

Incidences of sheep worrying occur on private land with and without public access. highlights the need for change to strengthen the protection of animal welfare and livelihoods. Improved legislation is desperately required to ensure dog owners act responsibly and are fully accountable for their dogs.

How do you commonly find out about sheep worrying by dog(s) incidents in your flock?



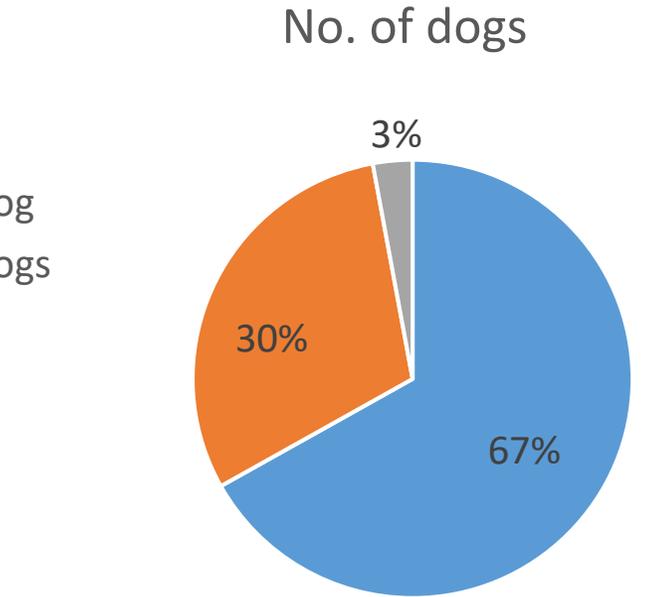
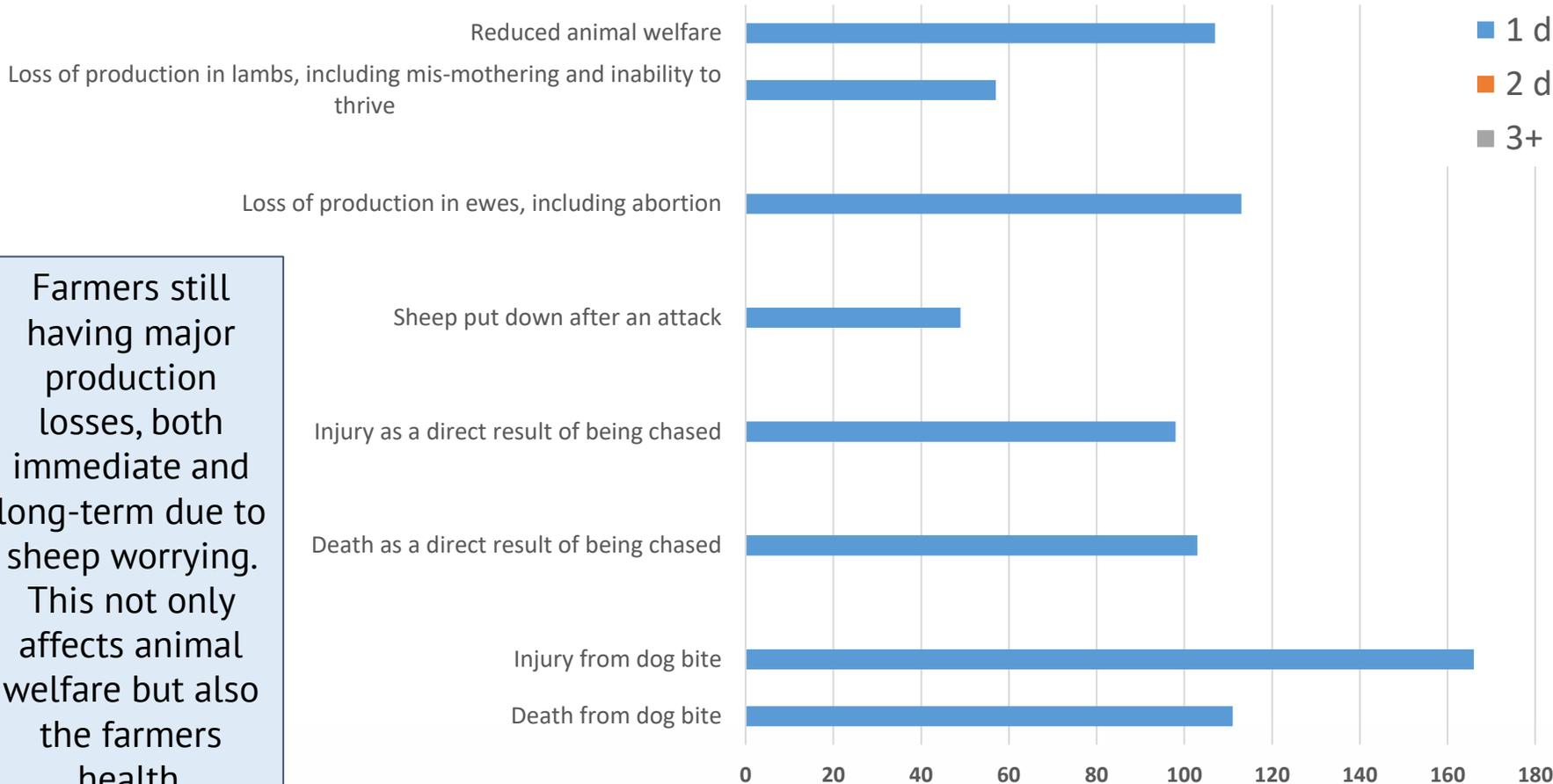
As you can see **in 86% of cases**, the dog owner isn't present. Even more concerning is that in **35% of cases** the farmer is left to find the evidence of sheep worrying. This suggests animals are often likely to be left suffering and injured for a period of time causing extreme distress to the sheep and also the farmer on discovering the upsetting scenes.



Nature of the incident

How many dog(s) are usually involved in a sheep worrying incident?

What impacts/injuries do you find most after sheep worrying?



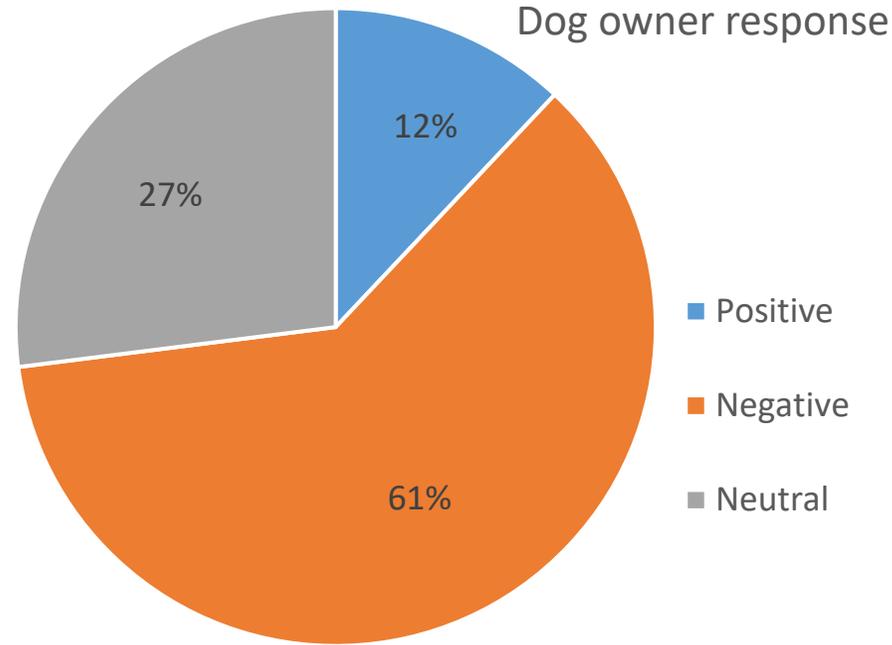
Farmers still having major production losses, both immediate and long-term due to sheep worrying. This not only affects animal welfare but also the farmers health.

In almost 67% of cases it's a single dog injuring or killing multiple sheep. Alarmingly 95% of respondents had between 1-10 incidents per year.

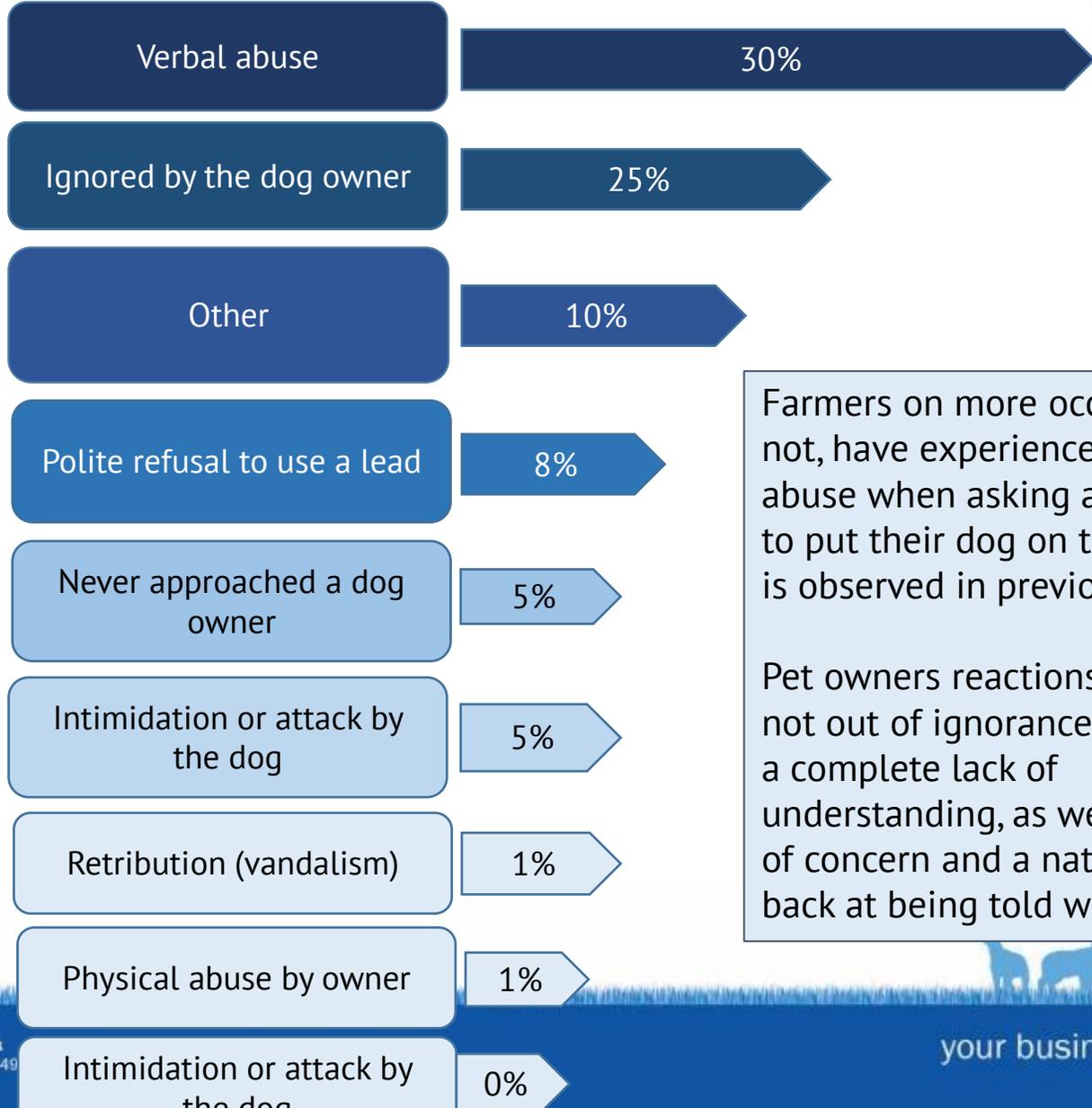




Farmer / Dog Owner communication



What was the outcome of approaching a dog owner to put their dog on a lead?



Farmers on more occasions than not, have experienced verbal abuse when asking a dog owner to put their dog on the lead. This is observed in previous surveys.

Pet owners reactions are usually not out of ignorance, but can be a complete lack of understanding, as well as a lack of concern and a natural push back at being told what to do.

If you approach a dog owner/walker to put their dog on a lead are you met with a positive or negative response?

Education is a key element in changing attitudes and behaviours to everyone's benefit. But farmers are still met with negative attitude from the majority of dog owners (when present). Also worth emphasising that the manner in which farmers approach or talk to a dog owner can be indicative of the response received.



Farmers left to pick up the pieces...

Unfortunately, the majority of the time the dog owners aren't present but when farmers do approach owners they are met with mixed outcomes.

90% of the time it's lack of education and once explained are happy enough to comply

Denied the dog was theirs

Can't catch up to them as in another field and dog straying

Mixed responses

Threaten me

What was the outcome/most common outcome of approaching the dog owner(s)/walker(s) to put their dog(s) on a lead?

90% of the time attitudes are great - 10% of the time i get told where to go, yelled at, spat at etc



as **7/10 severity** on farmers health (increase from 2022).



The majority of farmers are left feeling anger, frustration and upset. This year there were comments like becoming the norm and expected, demonstrating that sheep worrying is becoming so frequent, farmers are expecting it to happen.



National Sheep Association

#LeadOn

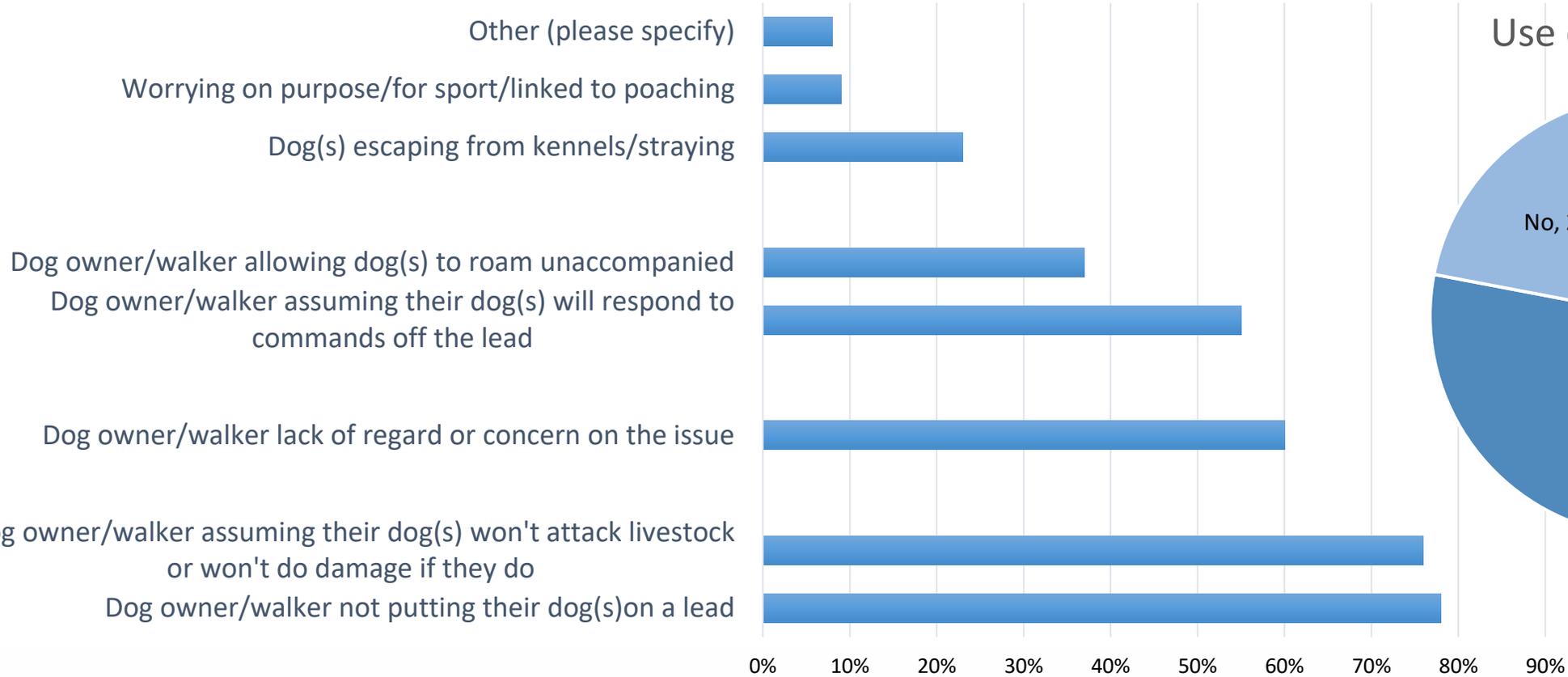


Causes and deterrents

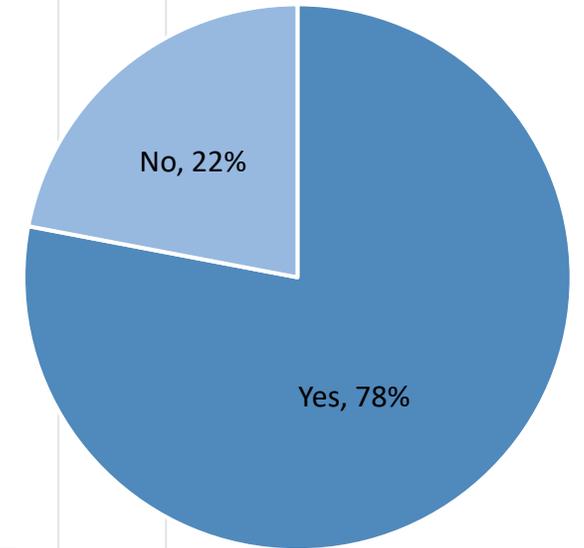
Increase in the number of respondents using signs. More farmers using signs as a reminder to the public. Previous years 2022 (78%) 2021 (72%), 2017 (71%), 2016 (64%).

What do you consider to be the main causes on your farm of sheep worrying by dog(s)? tick all that apply?

Do you currently display warning signs asking the public to keep their dog on a lead around livestock?



Use of signs on-farm



Respondents felt the majority of cases are caused by the dog being out of control/off lead or owner assuming dog won't attack livestock. Suggests increased education and responsibility could reduce the incidence. If more people put their dog on a lead in sheep fields, there would be less sheep worrying.

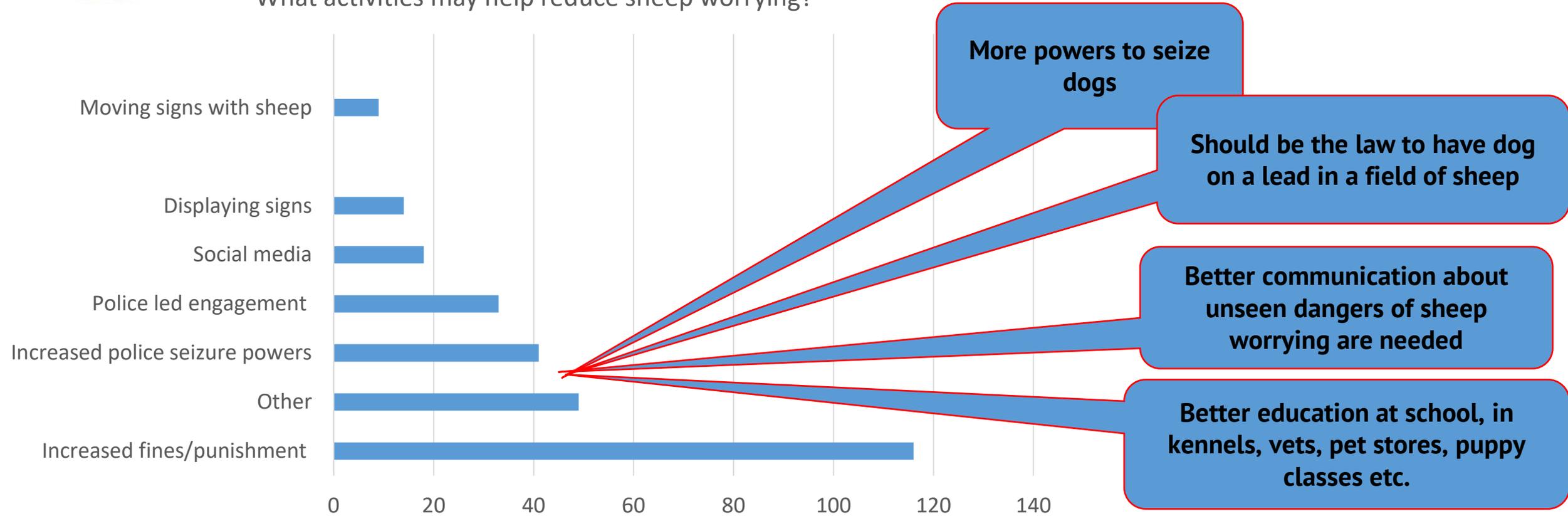




Are signs the solution?

What activity/activities do you think would help reduce sheep worrying by dog(s) incidents?

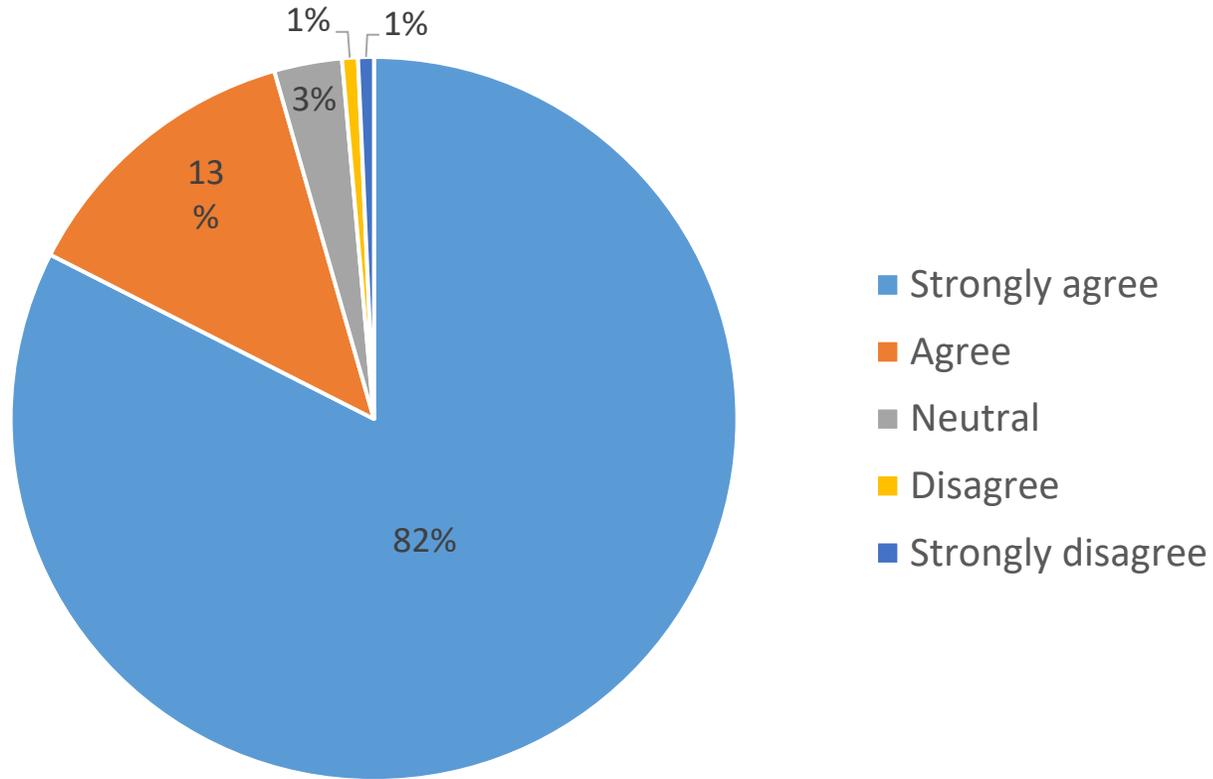
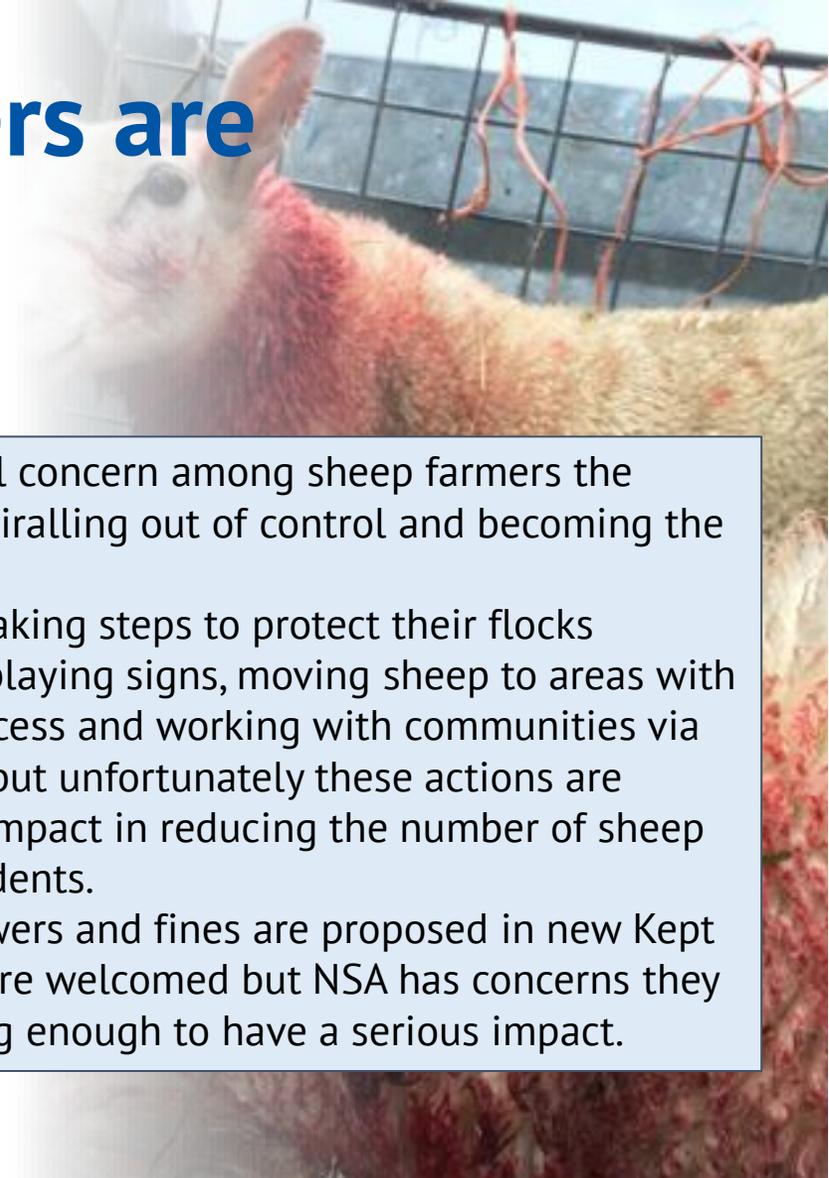
What activities may help reduce sheep worrying?



Respondents felt more powers and larger fines would encourage more responsible dog ownership. The Kept Animals Bill is behind schedule which is frustrating. NSA states it's still not fit for purpose, still not requiring dogs to be on leads when in fields with sheep and suggesting maximum fines for those found guilty being limited to £1000 in England. But this is compared to a recent change of legislation in Scotland that has seen the same crime punishable with up to a £40,000 fine or prison sentence. This disparity must be addressed. A lack of punishment and continued varied responses from Police Rural Crime teams is frustrating farmers who are experiencing great upset as well as financial loss because of this issue.



Do you agree additional powers are needed?



There is a real concern among sheep farmers the situation is spiralling out of control and becoming the norm. Farmers are taking steps to protect their flocks including displaying signs, moving sheep to areas with less public access and working with communities via social media but unfortunately these actions are having little impact in reducing the number of sheep worrying incidents. Increased powers and fines are proposed in new Kept Animals Bill are welcomed but NSA has concerns they will not strong enough to have a serious impact.

Do you agree additional powers are necessary across all UK administrations to respond to sheep worrying incidents, worrying, including increased penalties and additional powers for police to investigate and enforce the offence of livestock worrying and/or attack?





Who should take responsibility for action?

Asked respondents who should take responsibility in educating and raising awareness with dog owners and the unanimous vote was **everyone**.

It should be a multi agency approach between vets, police, farmers and dog breeder/rehoming facilities

The industry backed by support from the police

We need a nationwide campaign where everyone gets involve

Vets engage with the most dog owners and so could have the biggest impact

Parish councils could also become involved as well as education at schools

In your opinion, who should take responsibility in educating and raising awareness with dog owners?



Community effort, farmers should engage with dog walkers and explain where possible, but local policing teams should be involved, especially as some people can become aggressive when approached by farmer





Compensation did you get it? Was it right?

Did you receive compensation for the financial losses of sheep worrying by dog(s) incidents?

Level of compensation	
I did not pursue compensation	51%
I received insurance compensation	6%
I pursued insurance compensation but it was not granted	0.4%
I received court compensation	0.8%
I pursued court compensation but it was not granted	0.4%
I received compensation from the dog owner/walker directly	17%
I would prefer not to say	4%
I received partial insurance compensation	2%
Other (owner not known)	18%
I received partial court compensation	1%

No as the stress of the losses, injuries to the sheep, level of abortions and carcass disposal are horrendous.

No, we were told we could only be compensated for the actual animal not the loss of a lifetime of breeding or the lambs they were carrying

It covered the immediate costs but I am yet to find out what damage it did to my pregnant ewes

No amount of financial compensation makes up for the emotional impact

The insurance valuation of the animal was fair and the disposal cost was covered however the compensation did not cover the extra labour hours required to deal with the problem

Do you feel the compensation amount received fully covered the actual financial loss to your business?



Why didn't you receive compensation?

While compensation is seen as very important to cover the costs & impact of an attack by dogs, a small number of cases are pursued. Those that do pursue, only a small percentage receive any form of recompense – a sense of frustration throughout the sheep farming community.

Most often the dog owner cannot be identified, i.e. dogs are unaccompanied.

If you did not receive compensation for the financial losses of sheep worrying by dog(s) incidents, why was this the case?

I did not pursue compensation

44%

Insufficient Evidence

21%

Other (please specify)

16%

I would prefer not to say

6%

My insurance excess is too high to clai...

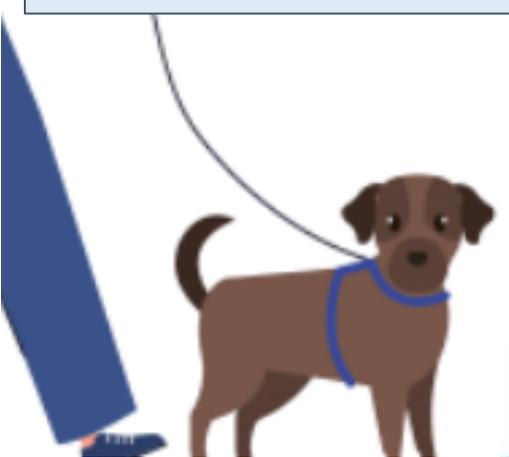
6%

My insurance policy does not cover...

4%

I do not have insurance for my flock

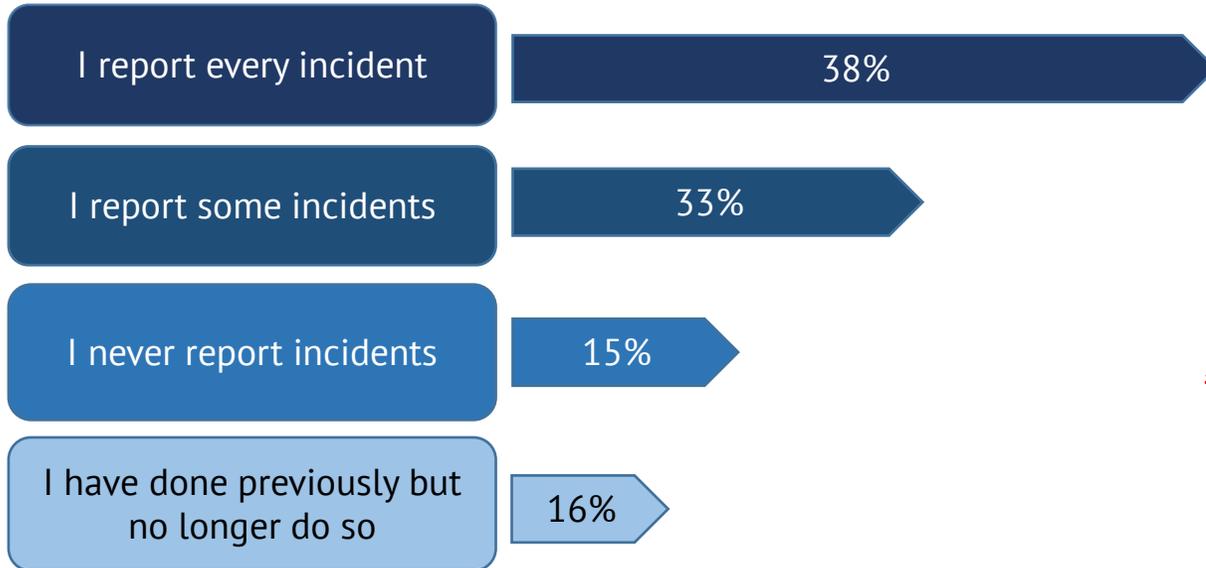
3%





Reporting sheep worrying

Do you report sheep worrying by dog(s) incidents to the police?



There was an increase in the number of respondents no longer reporting sheep worrying incidents. Shown previously that sheep worrying is becoming insidious. Can't stress how important it is to report **EVERY** case to help make changes. Without the stats NSA, the industry and police can't get policy changed and powers increased.

Rarely catch anyone to pursue

Usually do not see incident taking place or too far away to catch offender

Have not yet managed to track down the individual responsible for the most recent dog attack

Don't always know whose dog it is

If you did not receive compensation for the financial losses of sheep worrying by dog(s) incidents, why was this the case?





Police rating and local action

0 = no response 10 = very helpful

Region	Rating		
	2021	2022	2023
Central	3.68	3.91	3.91
Eastern	4.17	6.07	4.16
Marches	4.0	6.19	5.11
N. Ireland	2.0	N/A	1.23
Northern	3.35	3.33	4.38
Scotland	2.92	5.18	3.17
S. East	4.26	4.46	5.22
S. West	5.01	5.00	4.44
Wales	4.43	7.29	5.10



NO ATTACK SHOULD GO UNNOTICED

REPORT ALL SHEEP WORRYING CASES TO YOUR REGIONAL POLICE FORCE



If you have reported an incident of sheep worrying by dog(s) to the police, how would you rate their response?

Police rating varies, with an average score across the UK of **4/10**.



your business your future



Police reporting and outcome

If you have reported an incident of sheep worrying by dog(s) to the police, what was the outcome or what is the most common outcome?

Outcome of reporting to police	
Given a crime reference number	21%
Given an incident number	11%
Dog owner received restraining/resettling order for dog(s)	5%
Agreed out of court settlement with dog owner	6%
Dog(s) destroyed	2%
No outcome	23%
Have not reported to the police	16%
Other (police visit, lack of evidence to pursue claim, reluctance from police, nothing happens, can't find owner, verbal warning from police).	15%



Police action varies across the UK.

