

# Domestic Dog Predation: Protecting Your Flock

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## INTRODUCTION

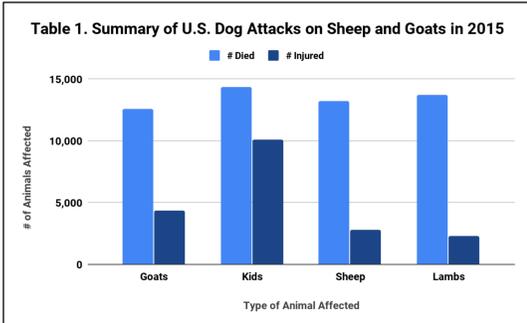
Dogs are culturally perceived as companion animals, but domestic dogs are ranked as the number one predator of goats and as the second most common predator of sheep, lambs, and kids.<sup>10,12</sup> This issue disrupts financial profits for agricultural producers and may ultimately have a negative impact on the producer's livelihood.



Consequences of an attack by German Shepherds

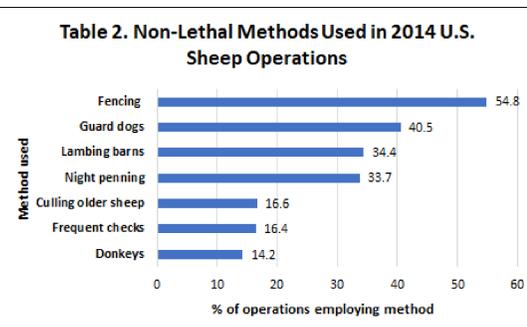
## Economics

- The total estimated economic loss attributed to non-lethal predation of goats and kids in 2015 was \$1.9 million.<sup>10</sup>
- The total estimated economic loss attributed to non-lethal predation of sheep and lambs in 2015 was \$5.1 million.<sup>12</sup>
- Table 1. emphasizes the increased, projected economic loss for sheep and goat producers as a result of *lethal* dog attacks.<sup>10,12</sup>



## Statistics

- 58% of sheep operations used one or more non-lethal method(s) for predator control in 2014. A majority of operations used only one non-lethal control method.<sup>12</sup>



## IDENTIFICATION

### Indicators of Dog Attack/Predation<sup>2,5</sup>

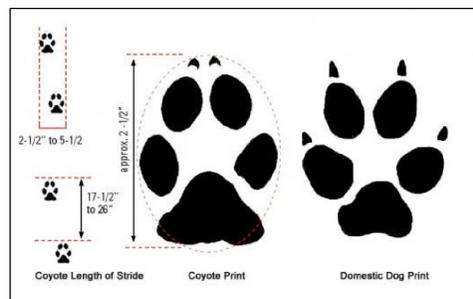
- Attacks hindquarters, flank, and head
- Wounds on front shoulders and badly torn ears
- Superficial neck wounds and severe lacerations
- Chewed appearance of carcass starting from anus
- Little flesh consumed
- Severely mutilated victims
- Dog attacks more common in urban settings

### Distinctions from Coyote Indicators<sup>5</sup>

Coyote	Dog
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selective on lambs</li> <li>• Hunts during the night or early morning</li> <li>• Efficient predators</li> <li>• One or two kills</li> <li>• Carcasses relatively close together near areas with cover that provides an easy escape</li> <li>• May take the carcass back to a den</li> <li>• May return to feed on carcasses</li> <li>• Fatal bite wounds on the throat</li> <li>• Black droppings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not selective with attacks</li> <li>• Attacks anytime, day or night</li> <li>• Inefficient kills with more drawn out attacks</li> <li>• Numerous dead sheep</li> <li>• Scattered carcasses throughout pastures</li> <li>• Carcasses remain at kill site</li> <li>• Not likely to return to kill site</li> <li>• Many non-fatal wounds</li> <li>• Brown droppings</li> </ul>

### Dog vs. Coyote Tracks<sup>5</sup>

Coyotes	Dogs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rectangular toes close together</li> <li>• Only middle nail marks visible if any</li> <li>• Appear in a straight line</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Round toes spread apart</li> <li>• All nail marks visible</li> <li>• Appear staggered</li> </ul>



Comparing coyote vs domestic dog tracks

## LEGALITY

### Ohio Revised Code Section 955.28

- Livestock owners are permitted to use lethal measures to control dogs that are **actively** chasing, threatening, harassing, injuring, or killing livestock, poultry, and other domestic animals.<sup>14</sup>
- The owner or keeper of the dog is subsequently responsible for any damages, injuries, or deaths incurred as a result of the dog.<sup>14</sup>

### Ohio Revised Code Section 955.22

- Dog owners are responsible for controlling their dog at all times using a leash, tether, adequate fence, supervision, or secure enclosure.<sup>13</sup>

### Taking Action

- Communicate with neighbors about the issue.<sup>2</sup>
- The dog owner is liable for any damages as a result of death, injury, or loss and therefore livestock owners may press charges if they choose to do so.<sup>14</sup>
- Humanely conducted lethal or non-lethal control measures to remove harassing dogs may still result in legal action by the dog owner to pursue compensation.<sup>15</sup>

## MANAGEMENT

### Effectiveness of Non-Lethal Control

Non-lethal control programs should suffice if implemented correctly. The best plan involves integrated damage management by minimizing risk.<sup>4,9</sup>

### Fencing

- 6-8 ft. in height, with less than 6 in. of spacing both horizontally and vertically
- Bury barbed wire underground to reduce digging
- Having one or more electrically charged wires at the top and bottom of the fence can increase effectiveness<sup>5</sup>

### Food Storage

- Properly store any feed or compost inside or away from the fence perimeter<sup>3</sup>

### Lambing Barns

- Females give birth in a protected space and remain with their young for several weeks<sup>9</sup>

### Night penning

- Remove goats and sheep from pasture into impassible wire fence pens at night<sup>8,9</sup>

### Note on coyotes

- Identifying before managing is crucial. Local coyotes not killing livestock may be exerting territorial dominance which can help prevent further livestock losses.<sup>4</sup>

### Techniques that may be *ineffective* against dogs:<sup>4,9</sup>

- Lighting corrals
- Fright devices/tactics

## GUARDIAN ANIMALS

### Dogs

- Benefit due to territorial exclusion of other canids<sup>6</sup>
- Choose breeds with strong protective instincts
- Toxicants, traps, and snares not recommended if using livestock protection dogs<sup>11</sup>

### Llamas

- Easy to train
- One gelded male can protect 300 sheep on 300 acres<sup>7</sup>

### Donkeys and Mules

- Cheapest investment
- Use one female or a gelding for smaller pastures<sup>7</sup>

## TAKE THE LEAD

### Learning from England's Approach<sup>1</sup>

Focuses on **education** to change dog owners' attitudes:

- Erecting signage to remind owners to keep their dogs on leashes
- Amplifying the message through apps and websites that work to incorporate owners rather than condemning them



A sign from England farmers' Take The Lead Campaign

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14. 9 Ohio Rev. Code § 955.28 (2008), available at <http://codes.ohio.gov/ocrc/955.28>
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### Pictures

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