



# LIVESTOCK PROTECTION DOGS: Protecting Sheep From Predators

**If you encounter a band of sheep while visiting America’s public lands, it is best to alter your route to minimize any contact.**

**However, if you cannot avoid contact:**

## Do:

- ▶ Watch for livestock protection dogs near sheep (usually large dogs, white or tan in color).
- ▶ Remain calm if a livestock protection dog approaches you.
- ▶ If you are on a bike, dismount and put the bike between you and the dog.
- ▶ Tell the dog to “go back to the sheep” or say “no” in a firm voice.
- ▶ Walk your bike until well past the sheep.
- ▶ Keep your distance and choose the least disruptive route around the sheep.
- ▶ Keep your dog leashed.

## Do Not:

- ▶ Chase or harass the sheep or dog(s).
- ▶ Make quick, threatening movements towards the sheep or dog(s).
- ▶ Try to outrun the dog(s).
- ▶ Attempt to befriend, pet, or feed the dog(s).
- ▶ Allow your dog to run towards or harass the sheep.
- ▶ Mistake a dog as lost and take it with you.

## Learn More

FOR MORE information on the use of livestock protection dogs and other wildlife damage management methods, contact the USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service’s Wildlife Services program toll free at 866-4USDA-WS (866-487-3297) or 301-851-4009. The use of livestock protection dogs is an important non-lethal method for predator control, encouraged by Wildlife Services as part of an integrated approach to resolve potential human-wildlife conflicts while safeguarding agricultural resources. To learn more, go to [www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage).

FOR MORE information on the management of public lands for multiple uses, contact the USDA’s Forest Service at 800-832-1355 or DOI’s Bureau of Land Management at 202-208-3801.



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# Why Use Livestock Protection Dogs?

IF UNPROTECTED, sheep are vulnerable to a variety of predators including coyotes, wolves, mountain lions, bears, and domestic dogs. Livestock protection dogs are a primary and traditional means of protecting sheep from predators. Modern livestock ranchers may elect to use pro-



tection dogs as an important and effective means of reducing predator attacks on sheep. Livestock protection dogs live with the sheep, patrolling the perimeters of sheep grazing areas to ward off potential predators. Livestock protection dogs have been used around the world for centuries and are an essential management tool in the United States. Without livestock protection dogs, thousands of sheep and lambs would be injured or killed by predators in the United States every year.

# Sharing Public Lands

MILLIONS OF visitors enjoy recreational opportunities available on public lands, including hiking, mountain biking, and trail riding. Management practices for public lands are designed to allow multiple uses of our natural resources. In addition to recreation, livestock grazing is a useful activity common on public lands that supports healthy watersheds and wildlife habitat. Responsible grazing can be used to manage vegetation to reduce invasive species, limit wildfire fuels, and encourage plant growth. Grazing allotments, administered by Government agencies, occur on lands managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior's (DOI) Bureau of Land Management.

Recreationists and ranchers share a love of the outdoors. Working together helps ensure that all those who use public lands can have a positive experience. Please treat all lands as you would like others to treat your property. Leave gates as found, stay on existing roads and trails, obey posted signs, and pack your garbage out.

# Avoiding Conflicts

AS MORE people enjoy and utilize our country's public lands, there is an increased potential for conflicts between people and livestock protection dogs. Livestock protection dogs are in place to protect the sheep in these areas, and if you do not appear to be a threat, the dogs will often just watch you pass

by. Livestock protection dogs are not pets; they are trained working dogs. Feeding or petting them will distract them from their job of protecting sheep and may encourage them to approach and follow other recreationists they encounter.

Generally, if you are on foot, horseback, or an all-terrain vehicle and come close to sheep, a livestock protection dog should have time to see and/or hear you approach and recognize that you are not a threat to the livestock. However, a rapidly approaching mountain biker, suddenly surprising the livestock protection dog, may appear to be a threat. Hikers with domestic dogs may be perceived as a greater threat. An unleashed dog encountering sheep likely will be perceived as a predator, which could cause an aggressive confrontation with the livestock protection dog.

Public lands offer fulfilling outdoor recreational opportunities. To avoid negative encounters with livestock and/or livestock protection dogs and enjoy a peaceful experience, recreationists should follow common sense guidelines.



**Predators account for more than 30 percent of sheep and lamb losses.**