



**COMPANION
ANIMAL WELFARE
GROUP WALES**



**GRŴP LLES
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CAWGW position statement: Livestock Worrying

Background

Livestock worrying is a serious problem which can have a number of substantial impacts on livestock, farmers, dogs and their owners. Under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953, it is an offence for a dog to attack or chase livestock in a way that may cause injury or suffering.

Currently, there is limited reliable data regarding livestock worrying across the whole of Wales, both regarding accurate figures of the number and nature of these incidents: North Wales Police is one of the only sources of accurate and detailed data on livestock worrying. Whilst costs of worrying incidents in Wales are believed to have fallen by a third in 2020¹, it is unknown whether this is a result of fewer attacks occurring in the first place or less serious incidents. As such, CAWGW believes robust data collection is required in order to understand the true extent of the problem and the reasons why it happens in order to develop an effective preventative approach.

Legislation

Under the existing legislation, 'livestock' refers to a limited range of animals, including cattle, sheep, goats, swine, horses, and poultry. We believe that this definition should be expanded to include camelids and other recently introduced species, in order to ensure that the legislation reflects the modernisation of the farming sector and the growing diversity of species kept as pets.

Between 2013 and 2017, 89% of livestock worrying offences reported to police in North Wales were committed without owners present² – for example, by a dog that had escaped from its owners' house, farm or garden. As such, any changes to legislation must take into consideration and address the issue of unaccompanied dogs, and not unduly restrict existing public access based on a popular but false assumption that walkers with dogs are the primary problem.

CAWGW is supportive of legislative changes which increase penalties for those guilty of livestock worrying. We believe that the strongest and harshest penalties must be reserved for aggravated offences – irresponsible dog owners that willingly allow their dog to worry livestock – and repeat offenders.

Signage and messaging

We believe landowners and farmers should have clear, up-to-date signage to warn dog owners and walkers about the presence of livestock in a field and on the open hill. Signage must be maintained, covered or removed when appropriate – for example, if the livestock have been moved to another location; signage must be accurate and credible in order to maintain public confidence and optimise its effectiveness. Similarly, if livestock are moved into a new field, signage must be erected clearly at entry and exit points to ensure owners and walkers are not caught unaware. We believe that this will

¹ <https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2021-02-02/cost-of-dog-attacks-on-farm-animals-in-wales-dropped-by-a-third-last-year-but-incidents-continue>

² <https://www.agriland.co.uk/farming-news/report-shows-dog-owners-not-present-in-89-of-livestock-worrying-cases/>



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help to reduce the number of worrying incidents and reduce the number of dog walkers being killed and suffering life-changing injuries each year from being trampled by cattle and other livestock.

The provision of alternative walking routes around livestock has proven to be effective in reducing the number of livestock worrying incidents. As such, CAWGW would also like to see signs provided which indicate how and where dog owners and walkers can avoid livestock.

Any signage and other public messaging must clearly explain best practice guidance, highlighting that while a short lead should be used around all livestock, walkers must let their dog off the lead if threatened by cattle or other livestock and take the quickest route out of danger, even if this means not using an official path. This will reduce the risk of death or injury to both people and livestock, and minimise the likelihood of compensation claims being made against the livestock's keeper.

Penalties should also have an educational component: those guilty of the offence should be required to undergo a mandatory awareness course or training on how to be a responsible dog owner. We believe that this is likely to be far more effective than other measures, such as banning orders and sentencing.

Prevention

The focus of any legislative changes or new guidance must be prevention. As previously mentioned, more accurate and reliable data collection will enable a greater understanding and analysis of the incidents that take place, which will in turn allow for the development of effective preventative measures.

One such approach in Wales could be the utilisation of Community Protection Notices (CPNs), which can be issued prior to a worrying incident taking place. For example, if someone lives near livestock and their dog has been found to stray, a CPN could be issued before worrying has actually occurred, to require the dog owner to fully secure their property's boundaries and will put them on a warning for any future straying. We believe that this would be most effective preventive approach for all concerned.