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# OntarioSheep FARMERS

On behalf of Ontario's 2700 sheep farmers, I am reaching out to bring the growing issue of livestock predation in your region to your attention.

The financial cost of predation not only affects farmers, in terms of preventative measures, such as fencing and Livestock Guardian Dogs (LGD); it also costs Ontario taxpayers, with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) paying farmers over \$1.5 million in the 2024 FY for losses of livestock caused by wildlife. This cost does not include the cost borne by municipalities and OMAFRA in sending investigators out to farms and administering the program. Nor does this cover the costs of veterinarians to help animals maimed by predators to recover, the production losses of animals who are stressed from predation and the mental health toll predation takes on the farmer.

As you can see by the chart below, your county is in the top 10 for sheep losses to predation. Also, in the chart below, we have shared the economic contribution of sheep farming in your region to impart the importance of finding solutions to the problem of predation that will benefit everyone.

County	Number of Sheep Kills in 2024	Owner Compensation	Economic Contribution to the Municipal Economy in 2024
Grey	133	\$39,366.20	\$31.03 million
Prince Edward	119	\$27,164.38	\$9.5 million
Leeds & Grenville	55	\$16,011.34	\$8.1 million
Kawartha Lakes	53	\$16,588.87	\$12.7 million
Peterborough	42	\$13,497.58	\$11.7 million
Lanark	38	\$11,053.14	\$3.8 million
Northumberland	33	\$8,797.34	\$5.3 million
Durham Region	31	\$9,852.30	\$12.9 million
Huron	27	\$10,242.06	\$30.7 million
Bruce	25	\$8,339.46	\$25.7 million

Producers are compensated for livestock losses from predation through the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program (OWDCP), which is a valuable resource to livestock producers in Ontario and appreciated by our farmer members.

We encourage your municipality to continue providing inspections and compensation to farmers through this vital program in a timely manner.

**There is another way your municipality can support your sheep farmers, and that is through your municipal dog control bylaws.** Livestock Guardian Dogs (LGD) are the most common form of predation prevention control used by Ontario sheep producers. However, there are instances when municipal by-laws hinder the efficient use of LGDs on farming operations as the by-laws are intended primarily for dogs kept



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for companionship, breeding, or non-working purposes. We have reviewed work done by several Ontario municipalities where LGDs have been specifically addressed when creating or revising existing by-laws.

**OSF wishes to work cooperatively with you to ensure that municipal bylaws take into consideration the use of LGD when developing their bylaws. We would be pleased to communicate with the appropriate municipal officials to review with you Ontario sheep producers' needs and concerns in this area.**

Below are some of the primary areas of concern and suggested options for consideration by your municipality.

#### **Add Definition of Livestock Guardian Dogs (LGDs) and Herding Dogs to By-laws**

We propose that: "Livestock Guardian Dog" (LGD) be defined as a dog that works and/or lives with domestic farm animals (e.g. cattle, sheep, poultry) to protect them while repelling predators and is used exclusively for that purpose.

"Herding Dog" means a dog that has been trained and is actively being used in a bona fide farming operation for the purposes of controlling livestock on the farm.

There are different breeds of LGDs of which the most popular breeds in Ontario include Great Pyrenees, Akbash, Kuvasz, Maremma and Anatolian Shepherd and crosses between these breeds. Although not an exhaustive list, dogs generally used for herding include Border Collies, Australian Shepherds, Blue & Red Heelers and Huntaways.

#### **Dog Registration/Licensing Requirements**

Paying annual dog registration/license fees for numerous working farm dogs can become a significant cost for sheep producers. We urge municipalities to exempt LGDs and herding dogs from annual license fees as is done in many jurisdictions for assistance/service dogs and working police dogs. Reducing the annual cost of keeping LGDs, will increase the number of LGDs on farms, and likely reduce predation losses and the number of OWDCP compensation claims.

#### **Requirement for Dogs to Wear a Collar and Tag**

LGDs' instincts are to guard and follow the flock, sleeping and working outdoors in all kinds of weather. Collars can become snagged on branches or fences and become a skin irritant in hot or wet weather. We suggest that municipal by-laws allow owners to remove the collar and license tag (if applicable) from a guardian or herding dog while the dog is being actively used in farming practices provided that the owner uses an alternative means of identification linking the animal to the name and address of the owner, e.g. tattoo or microchip containing the required information.

#### **Requirements for Kennel Licensing and/or Limitation on Number of Dogs Kept**

In some areas bylaw requires a person with more than three dogs at the same premises to secure a kennel license. Coyotes are very smart and will lure the dogs away while the remaining coyotes kill the sheep or lambs from behind or will attack the dogs directly. It is not uncommon for farmers to have more than two LGDs, especially when they are training younger dogs. This is especially true in areas where there is heavy



predation. As well, larger sheep flocks in Ontario (several over 1500 animals), require numerous dogs to provide adequate protection especially where higher numbers of predators are present.

We would propose for your consideration that a person may keep more than three dogs at a premise without obtaining a kennel license provided:

- the person is keeping sheep (or other livestock) upon the same premises.
- the premises is on land that is zoned rural and agricultural.
- the person provides proof of producer registration issued in the name recorded by the Ontario Sheep Farmers, Beef Farmers of Ontario, or Ontario Goat.
- the dogs are registered/licensed annually in accordance with relevant municipal by-laws (if required) and that the dogs are LGDs and or herding dogs.

### **Running At Large**

A dog shall not be running at large if it is an LGD and is on its owner's leased or owned property.

### **Barking Restrictions**

LGD are exempt from barking restrictions if actively engaged in guarding livestock against predators. Under the Farming and Food Production Protection Act farmers are protected from nuisance complaints made by neighbours provided they are following normal farming practices. The use of LGD on sheep farms is a widely used practice in Ontario and other sheep producing jurisdictions.

### **Aggressive/ Dangerous Dog designation**

LGD act aggressively and show aggression towards things they view as a threat to the livestock they are protecting. As such, an exemption, like that for police dogs should be considered.

