



IFA Protocol for Farmers on Sheep Kills by Dogs

The IFA has developed a protocol for farmers who encounter a dog attack on their sheep flocks. This 10-point plan is a simple, easy-to-follow protocol aimed at helping sheep farmers who encounter a dog attack on their flock. The IFA is also working with the Department of the Environment and Local Government, including the dog warden services on highlighting responsible dog ownership.

1. Stop the dogs

On encountering a dog attack on sheep, the first priority must be to stop the attack immediately, apprehend the marauding dog or dogs and look after the welfare of the sheep.

2. Follow the Law

It is very important that sheep farmers are aware of, and follow the law, in the context of protecting their sheep flock against marauding dogs.

Under the 1984 Control of Dogs Act it states under the section - Defence in action for damages for shooting a dog.

(1) It shall be a defence to any action for damages against a person for the shooting of a dog, or to any charge arising out of the shooting of a dog, if the defendant proves that—

(a) the dog was shot when it was worrying, or was about to worry, livestock and that there were no other reasonable means of ending or preventing the worrying; or

(b) (i) the dog was a stray dog which was in the vicinity of a place where livestock had been injured or killed, and

(ii) the defendant reasonably believed that the dog had been involved in the injury or killing, and

(iii) there were no practicable means of seizing the dog or ascertaining to whom it belonged; and

(c) he was the person in charge of the livestock; and

(d) he notified within forty-eight hours the member in charge at the nearest Garda Station to the place where the dog was shot of the incident.

(2) The provisions of subsection (1) (a) and subsection (1) (b) (i) and (iii) of this section shall be deemed to have been satisfied if the defendant believed that those provisions had been satisfied and he had reasonable grounds for that belief.

3. Inform the Gardai

It is very important that a sheep farmer would notify the Gardai of any dog attack on their sheep. If a dog is shot following or threatening a sheep flock, the person who shot the dog must notify the member in charge at the nearest Garda Station to the place where the dog was shot, within forty-eight hours.

It is important that the owner of the sheep would report the incident in full, make an official complaint and request that a full investigation is undertaken and report filed. In addition, the farmer should request a site visit from the Garda.

4. Ring the Dog Warden

Immediate contact should be made with the local dog warden of any sheep attack and the full details reported with a request for a site visit and full report to be filed.

5. Contact the IFA

All dog attacks should be notified to the local IFA regional office or head office, and the local IFA branch representative and member of the National Sheep Committee from the County involved should be informed.

6. Ring the Vet

To look after any injured sheep and protect the welfare of the flock, a vet should be contacted and asked to visit and inspect the flock. The farmer should ask the vet to write a brief report recording the important statistics such as the numbers dead, severely injured and treated. This report is vital evidence on the case.

7. Keep the Evidence/Take a picture

Pictures of dead sheep, injured sheep, dead dogs etc., should be taken on the spot with a smart phone etc., as this again can prove to be vitally important in terms of evidence. All dead sheep must be disposed of and recorded into the knackery.

8. Get a valuation of losses

Contact a local auctioneer or valuer and have any dead sheep valued on the spot and any other losses documented.

9. Inform your insurance company

It is very important to inform your insurance company of any dog attack as soon as possible after the incident occurs. Likewise it is very important to establish the insurance company of the dog owner (home and/or farm insurance).

10. Tell your sheep farming neighbours

It is very important that other sheep farmers in the local area are aware of any dog attack in their vicinity, particularly if the dogs are not apprehended. Utilise the local community alert or text messaging facility if available.