



Sheep worrying by dogs

NSA Survey 2021

part of the NSA #LeadOn campaign

An illustration of a person's leg in a blue suit and black shoe, holding a black leash attached to a brown dog with a blue collar. The dog is standing and looking towards the viewer.

Sheep 
National Sheep Association

**Worrying
Fortnight**

30th April - 13th May

#LeadOn





Key findings:

- NSA received a record breaking response for its 2021 survey with more respondents completing the annual survey than ever before. An increase of 20% on the previous highest response (2014 joint survey with Farmers Guardian) was observed with an incredible increase of 460% on number of responses from the 2020 survey.
- On average, each respondent experienced seven cases of sheep worrying during the past year resulting in five sheep injured and two sheep killed per attack. Estimated financial losses through incidents of sheep worrying of up to £50,000 were recorded, with an average across all respondents of £1570. However, most respondents received no or very little compensation.





Key findings (continued):

- Farmers reported feeling of anxiety, anger, upset, stress and frustration as a result of sheep worrying by dogs attacks with more than half recognising this was adversely affecting their mental health.
- 67% of respondents have witnessed an increase in attacks during the Covid-19 pandemic associated they believe with an increase in dog ownership and the general public spending more time walking in the countryside.
- More than half of all respondents had experienced abuse or intimidation when personally asking dog owners to put their pet on a lead.





Sheep worrying by dogs

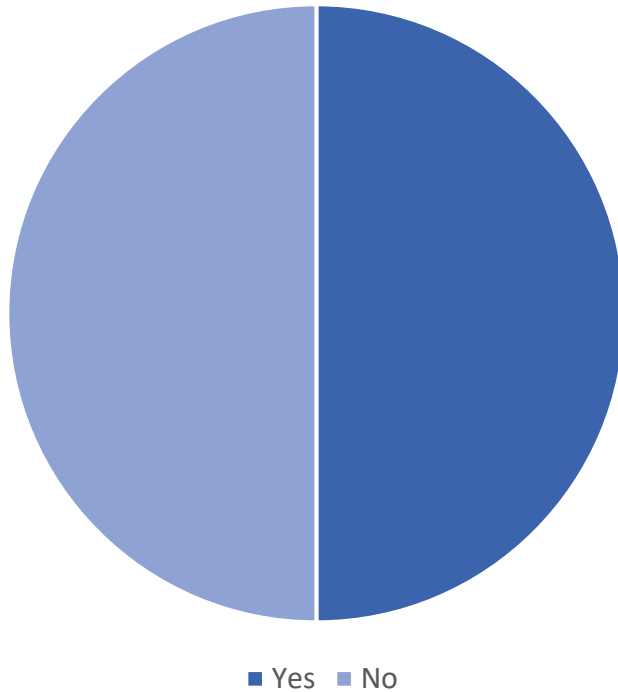
NSA Survey 2021 – Main results



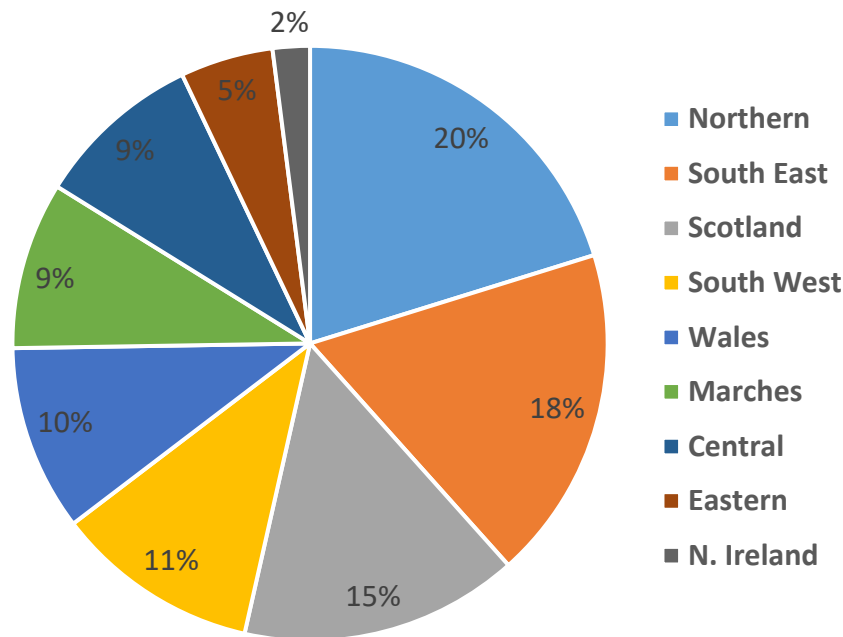


Contributor profile

NSA Member



Regional Split



616 people contributed to the 2021 survey, an increase in number of responses +20% vs highest previous response, since first survey completed in 2013.

The Northern region of England had the highest number of survey responses. This could be due to a combination of high sheep density and large areas of common land and national parks. Scotland also responded well, possibly due to increased publicity and awareness around recent changes to legislation. South East England response is traditionally high this is due to higher urbanised proximity and density of people.

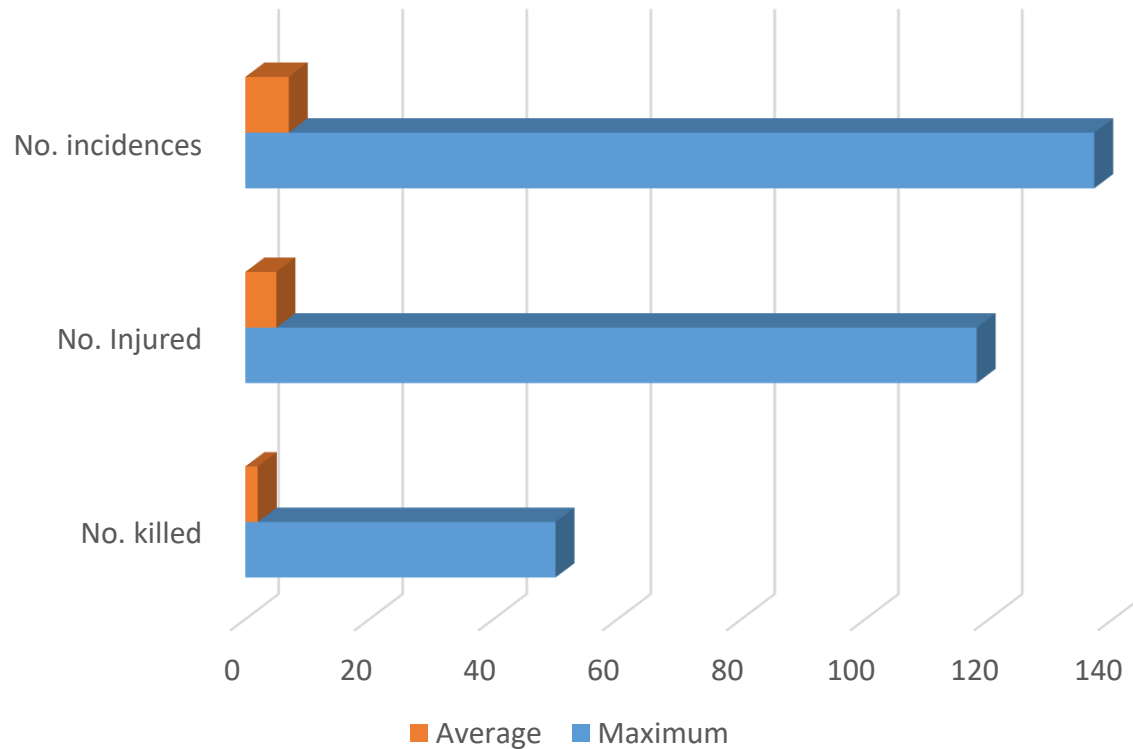
Sheep worrying by dogs survey 2021 n=616





Incidents & severity

Incident severity



How many incidents experienced per farmer in the last year?

Max 137 Average 7

How many sheep injured per incident?

Max 118 Average 5

How many sheep have been killed per incident?

Max 50 Average 2

2021 results mostly correspond to NSA findings from previous years but combined with the increased number of respondents to the survey suggests a growing problem.

Alarming several respondents reported more than 100 incidents in the last 12 months.

UK sheep and flock numbers have decreased by 4% in recent years, but the number of attacks remains consistent.

Figures from other sources also suggest an increase in cases - <https://www.fginsight.com/news/dog-attacks-on-sheep-rise-as-lockdown-sees-dog-ownership-spike-118538> NFU Mutual estimate a 50% rise in claims in Q1 2021

Sheep worrying by dogs survey 2021 n=616





Personal impact on farmers

Anger is the most common emotion, which comes from the stress, anxiety, frustration and feeling of helplessness that comes when facing a dog attack.

Sheep farmers are also dog owners and often not just working dogs; so the sense of disbelief that another dog owner can show so much disrespect for animal welfare brings sadness also.

Loss of income as important, but second to animal welfare & the concern over the inconsiderate behaviour of many dog owners.



What is your personal response to a sheep worrying by dog(s) incident? (i.e. stress, disbelief, fear, anger, emotional distress)

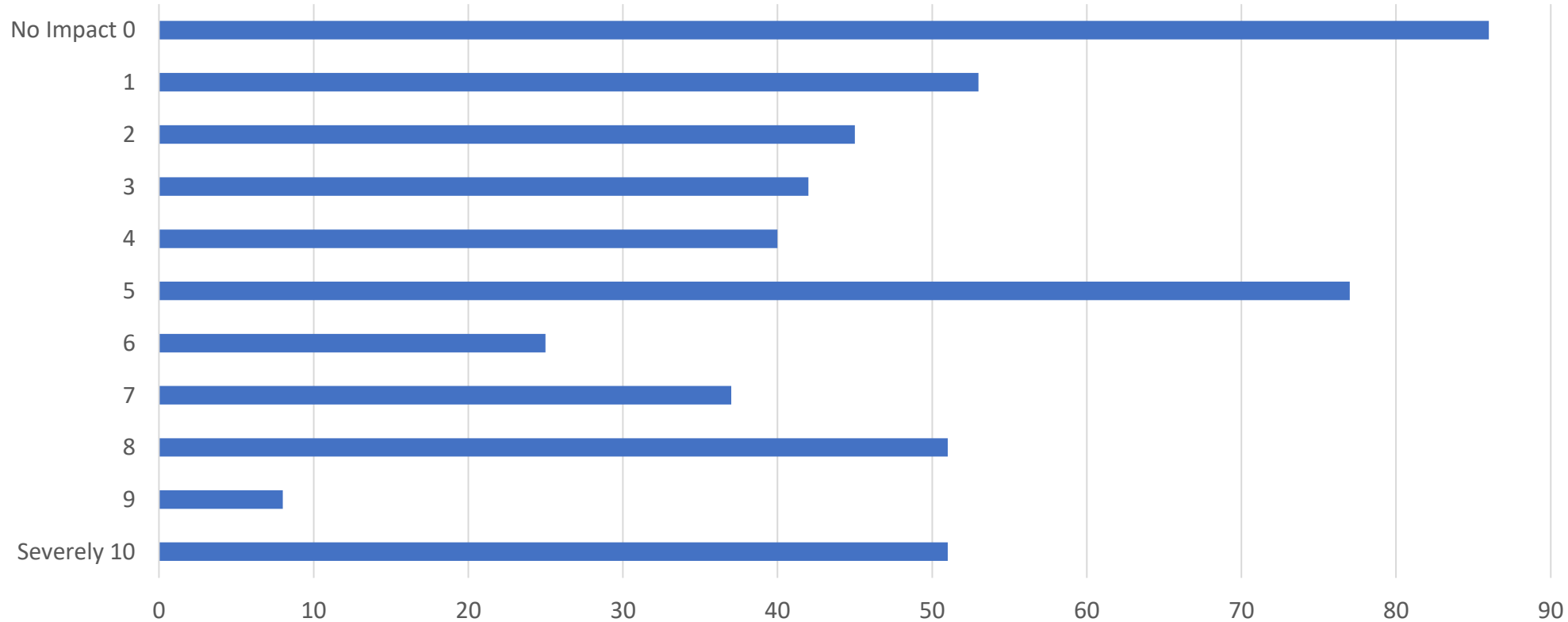
Sheep worrying by dogs survey 2021 n=515





Impact on farmers mental health

Severity of impact on mental health



Mental health is very much in the news at the moment, due to lockdown. Relief for many comes from being able to take walks in the countryside.

However the increased amount of people walking also impacts the mental well-being of farmers, creating anxiety and fear of dogs worrying and attacking sheep – 56% of respondents reported a moderate to severe impact on their mental health due to suffering a sheep worrying incident

How severely impacted has your mental health been as a direct result of sheep worrying by dog(s) on your flock? 0 = no impact, 10 = severely impacted

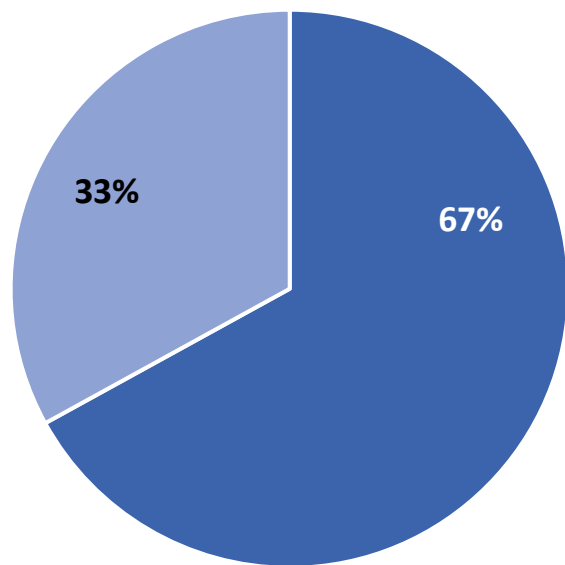
Sheep worrying by dogs survey 2021 n=515





Impact of Covid-19

Increase due to Covid



■ Yes ■ No

More dog owners at home with more time to exercise

63%

Increased ownership of dog(s) as pets

35%

Dog location unknown or left unattended

35%

No increase perceived

16%

Other (inc. owners not bothered, footpath access,)

9%

During Covid19 lockdown, more than two thirds of respondents witnessed an increase in incidents, put down to more dog owners being at home with more time to exercise dogs.

Pet Food Manufacturers Association (PFMA) estimates there are 12m dogs in the UK and have seen an 11% increase in pet ownership during lockdown. This extra demand has created problems in supply and with longer waiting times, some have been driven to source dogs from puppy farms, where dog owning advice is unlikely to be given.

There has also been a reduction in access to dog training due to lockdown

11. Did you see an increase of sheep worrying by dog(s) incidents as a direct result of the national lockdown(s) experienced in 2020/2021?

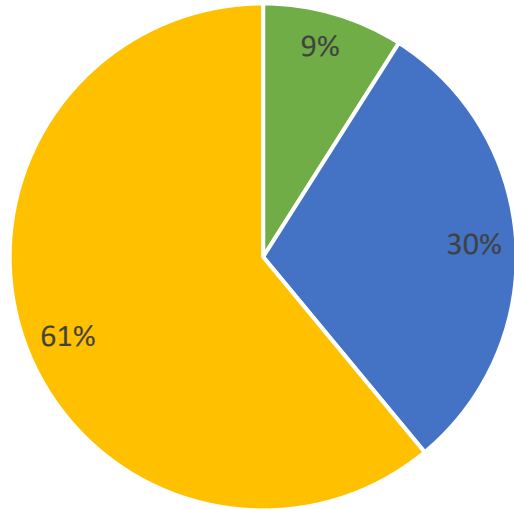
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Farmer/Dog owner communication

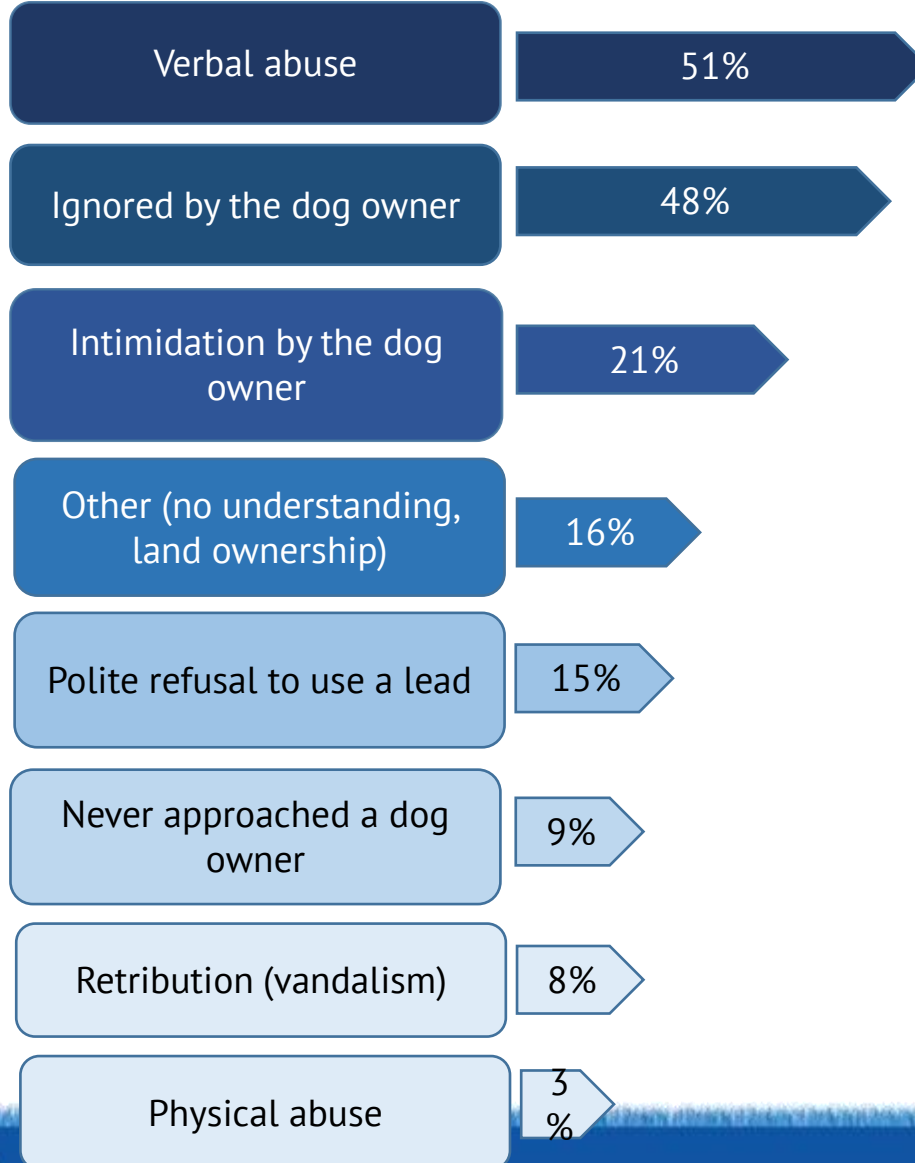
Response



■ Positive ■ Neutral ■ Negative

22, If you approach a dog owner/walker to put their dog on a lead are you met with a positive or negative responses?

23. What was the outcome of approaching a dog owner to put their dog on a lead?



Farmers on more occasions than not, have experienced verbal use when asking a dog owner to put their dog on the lead.

Pet owners reactions may be out of ignorance, but could be a complete lack of understanding, as well as a lack of concern and a natural push back at being told what to do.

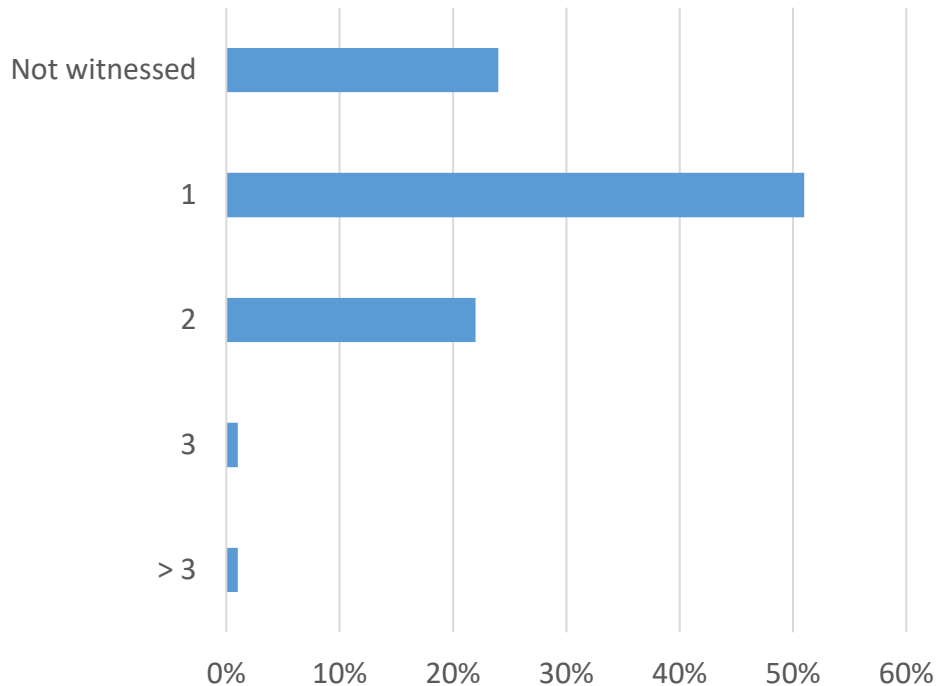
Education is a key element in changing attitudes and behaviours to the benefit of all – applicable also to some farmers as the manner in which they approach or talk to a dog owner can be indicative of the response received.

Sheep worrying by dogs survey 2021 n=616

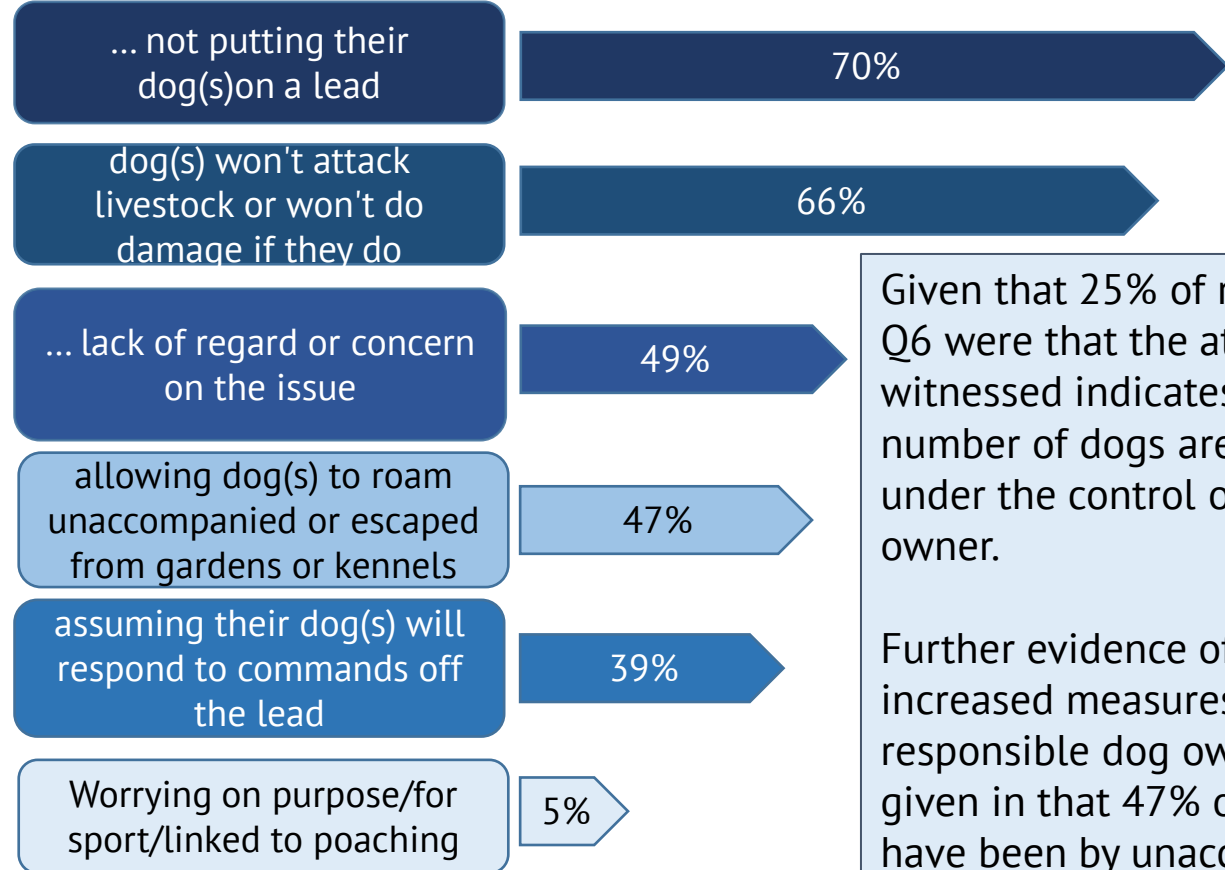


Dogs involved

Number of dogs



10. What are the occasions of a dog attack on your sheep? (multiple responses)



Given that 25% of responses to Q6 were that the attack was not witnessed indicates that a number of dogs are definitely not under the control of the pet owner.

Further evidence of the need for increased measures of responsible dog ownership are given in that 47% of incidents have been by unaccompanied dogs.

Q6 How many dog(s) are usually involved in a sheep worrying incident?

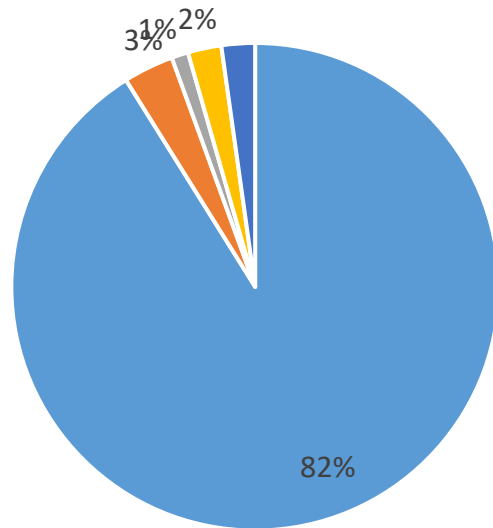
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Legislation changes

Agree with Scottish law?



■ Yes ■ No ■ unaware ■ Other ■ No comment

28. Do you feel that the proposals to change and update legislation currently being discussed (now passed) in Scottish Parliament should be implemented across the UK administrations?

Respondents agree that a change in legislation is required – 82% supporting the recent change in Scottish law, to be extended across the UK.

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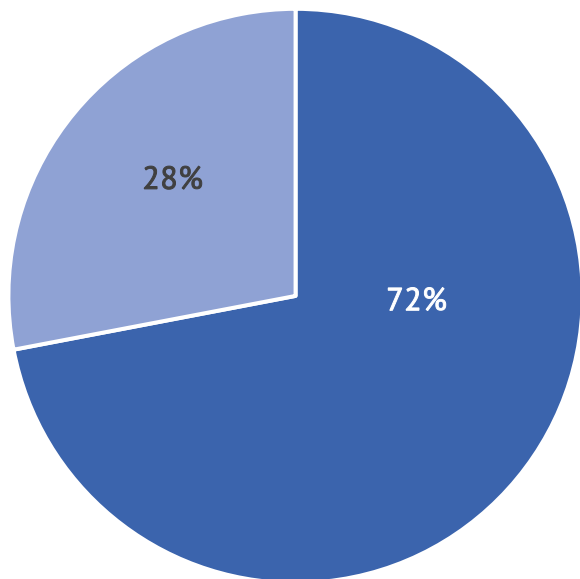




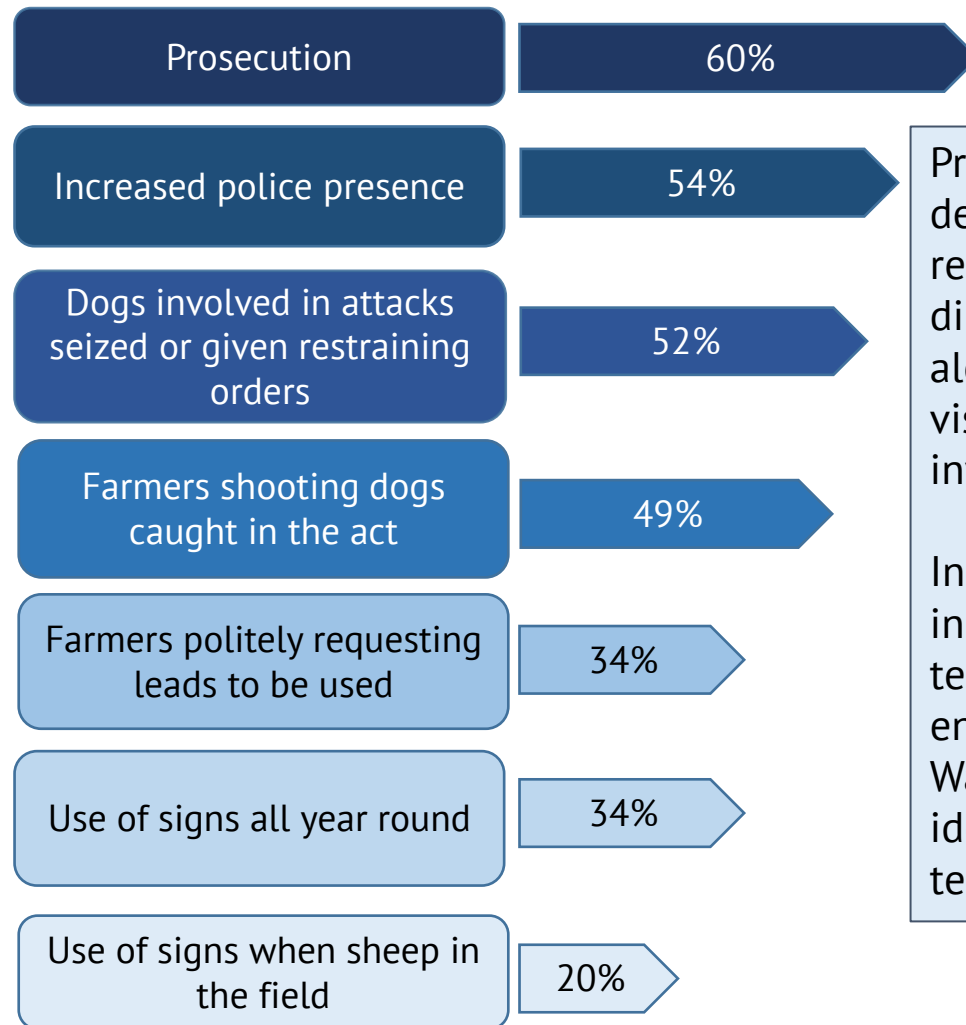
Use of signs & other deterrents

What activity/activities do you think would help reduce sheep worrying by dog(s) incidents (multiple answers?)

Use of signs



■ Yes ■ No



Prosecution is sought as a deterrent; 60% of respondents agree with the direction seen in Scotland, along with an increased visibility of police involvement.

Increased police presence includes Active Rural Crime team, Police-led community engagement, police-led Farm Watch scheme & dog identification (DNA) techniques.

26. Do you currently display warning signs asking the public to keep their dog on a lead around livestock?

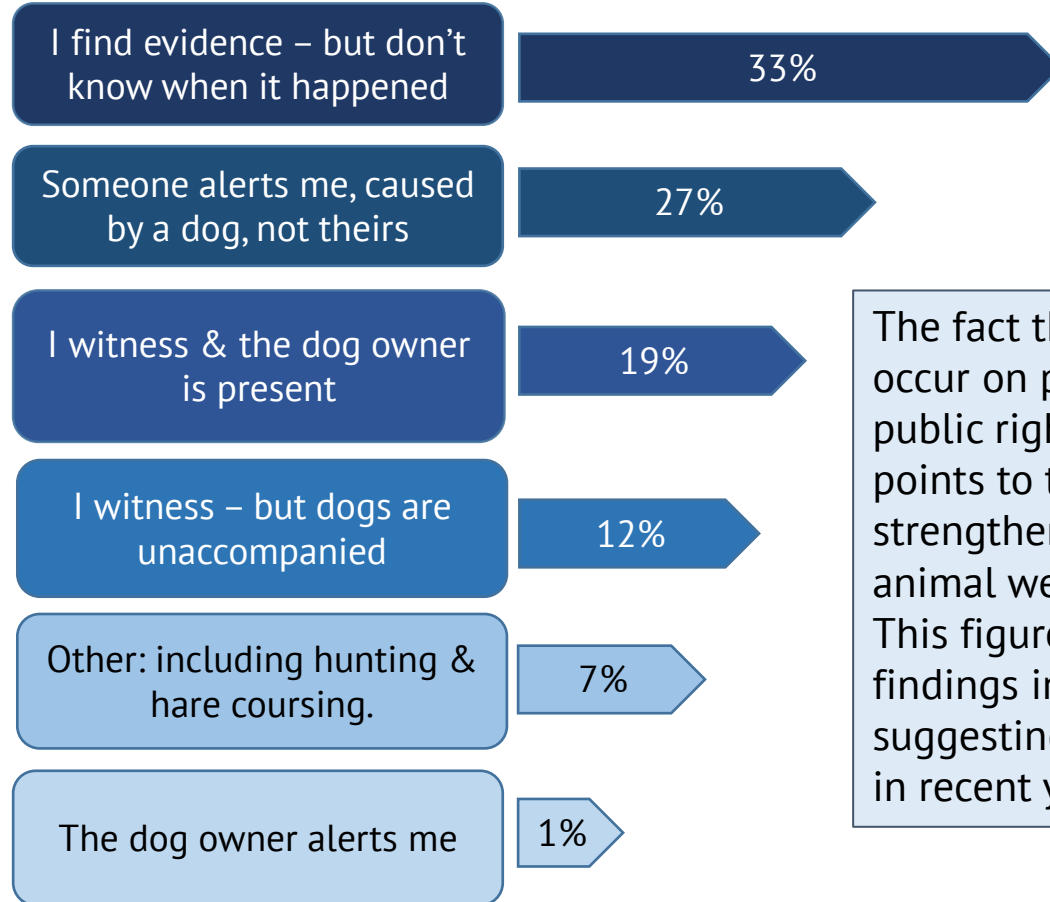
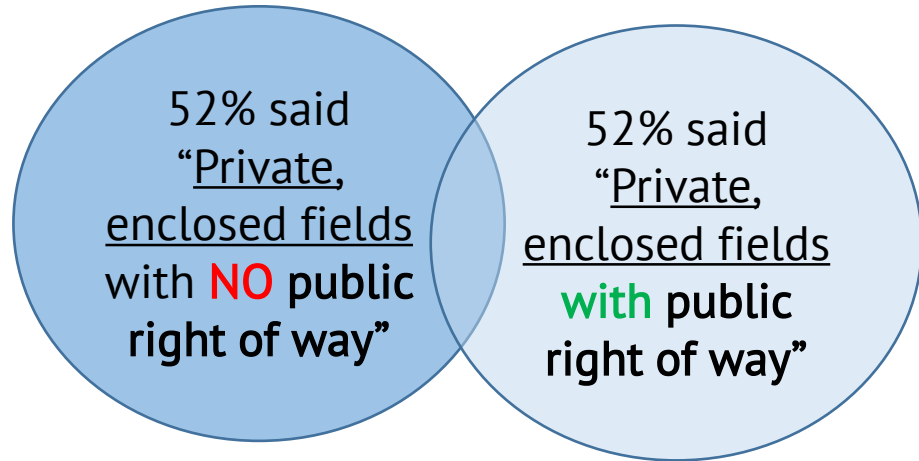
Sheep worrying by dogs survey 2021 n=616





Nature of attack

9. What is most common scenario for sheep worrying by dog(s) incidents?



The fact that 52% of attacks occur on private land with NO public right of way, further points to the need for change to strengthen the protection of animal welfare and livelihoods. This figure is consistent with the findings in earlier NSA surveys, suggesting little has been done in recent years.

7. Where have you found sheep worrying by dog(s) incidents on your sheep occur?

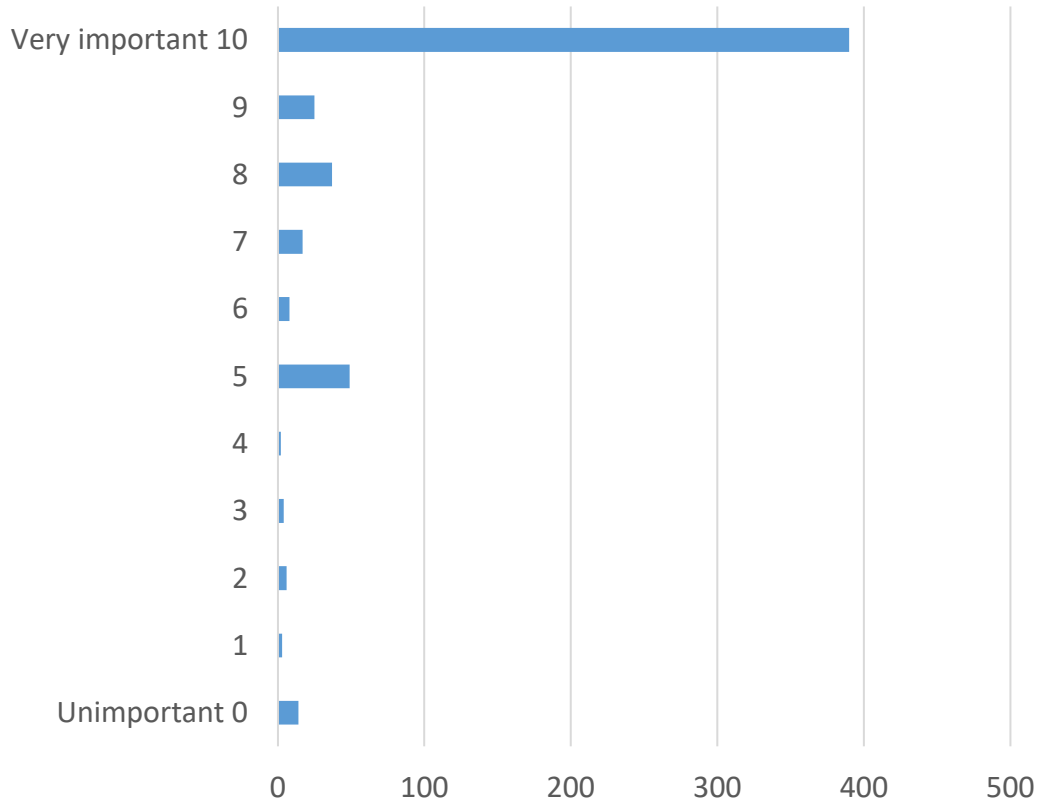
Sheep worrying by dogs survey 2021 n=616





Compensation

No of respondents



Compensation type	% of respondents
Did not pursue compensation	52%
From dog owner	15%
Insurance (whole & partial)	6% + 2%
Court (whole & partial)	1% + 1%
Pursued but not granted (insurance & court)	3% + 1%
Declined to comment & pending	7% & 3%

Inability to identify dog owner most common reason for not pursuing

Insufficient evidence, no insurance, police did not continue

Whilst compensation is seen as very important to cover the costs and impact of an attack by dogs, less than one in two cases are pursued & those that do pursue only a small percentage receive any form of recompense – a sense of frustration throughout the sheep farming community.

Most often the dog owner cannot be identified, i.e. dogs are unaccompanied and in only 1% of cases does the dog owner report an incident where their pet has been responsible.





Financial & business cost

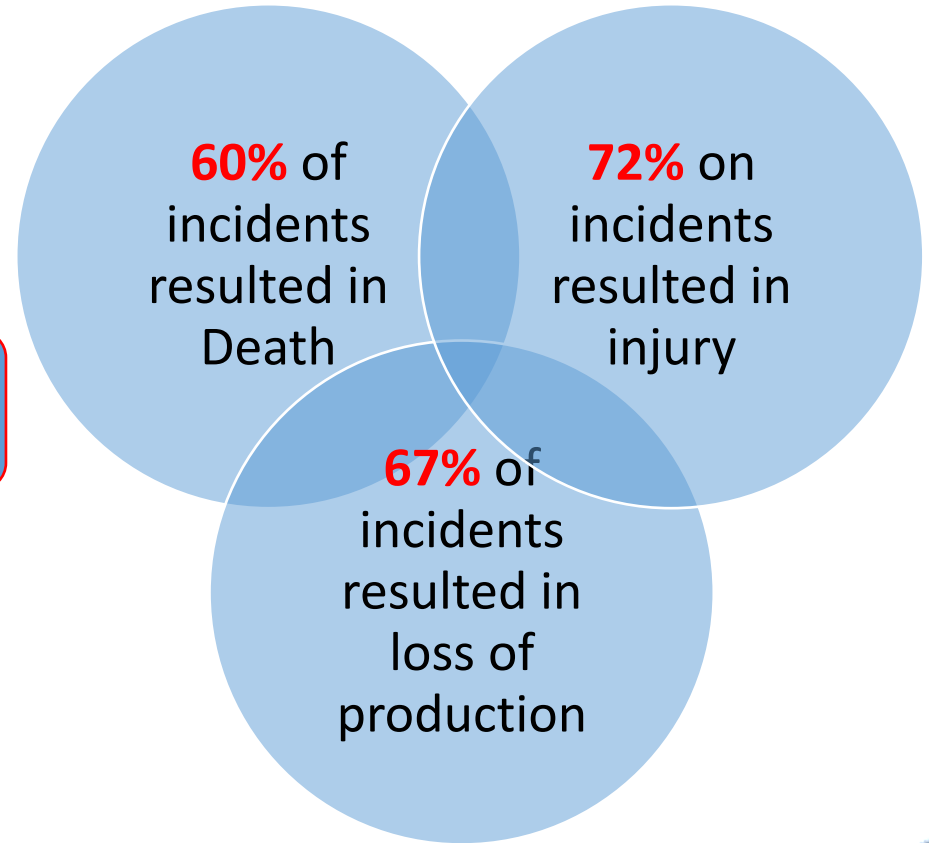
- Estimates up to **£50,000** were recorded
- An average across all respondents was **£1570**
- **Only 10% of respondents felt that the compensation covered their financial loss**

I cannot really put a price on my time spent trying to educate dog owners and also the stress and anger I feel.

Abortion storm - unseen worrying incident - TOTAL LOSS

Because of worrying claims in the past I have become uninsurable

Q8 What type of impacts/injuries do you find most commonly occur as a result of sheep worrying by dog(s)?



Q13 Can you provide an estimated annual figure of financial loss as a result of sheep worrying by dog(s) on your flock?

Sheep worrying by dogs survey 2021 n=555



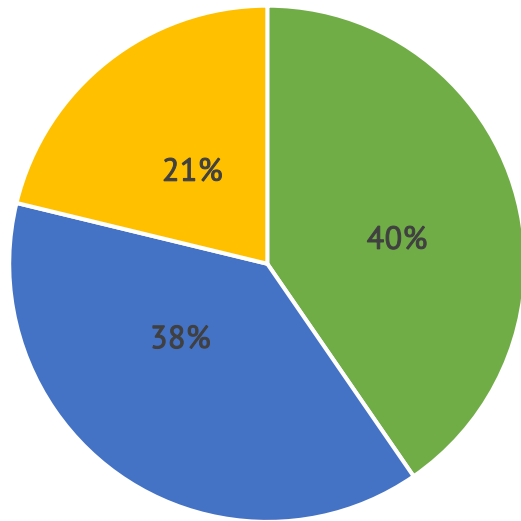


Police response

See next slide for further commentary

Q19 If you do report, how would you rate their response in terms of being helpful on a scale of 0-10? = **3.85**

How many report to police

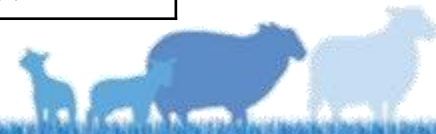


■ If serious ■ Every incident ■ Never report

No change from previous surveys

If reported, what was the outcome	% of respondents
Given a crime reference or incident number	31% + 23%
No outcome	30%
Out-of-court settlement	6%
Warnings issued to dog owners	5%
Dog owner received court summons	3%
Dog owner received restraining/resettling order for dogs	2%
Dogs destroyed	2%

What positive activity from local police force	% of respondents
No positive activity	48%
Rural Crime team or Farm Watch scheme in place	33% & 10%
Not known, not visible or not aware	8%
Steps taken to prosecute dog owners	7%
Police engagement through meetings &/or media	5%



Q18 Do you report sheep worrying incidents by dogs to the police?

Sheep worrying by dogs survey 2021 n=533



Commentary on police responses

The number of cases where a crime reference number or crime incident number has been issued has increased significantly (70% & 30% respectively) when reporting a dog attack on sheep.

Additionally 33% said that a Rural Crime team or Officer had now been appointed, representing more than double those reporting similar in 2017.

However, a majority of respondents (56% in total), felt that there was no positive activity & there was a lack of visibility of police action in their area.

In 2020 the average police rating was 3/10 – so a very slight but not really significant change to 3.85 in 2021, police responsiveness was most highly rated in the South West region.

Regional Police Rating

If you do report, how would you rate their response in terms of being helpful on a scale of 0-10?

Region	Rating
Northern	3.35
South East	4.26
Scotland	2.92
Central	3.68
Eastern	4.17
Marches	4.00
N. Ireland	2.00
South West	5.01
Wales	4.43
UK	3.85

