

# NSA sheep worrying by dogs awareness campaign 2024





# Sheep attacks by dogs is the most common problem experienced by rural police

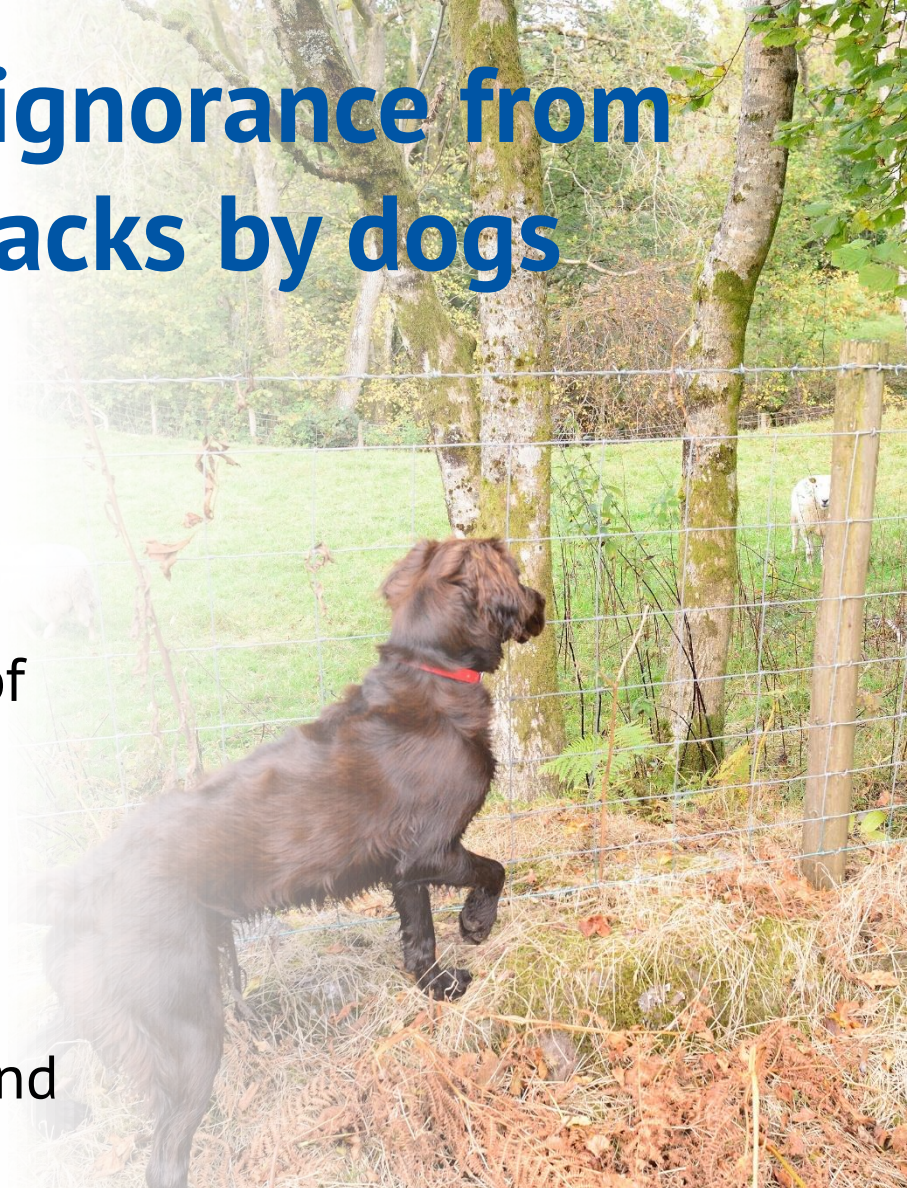
- ❑ The majority of forces said sheep attacks were the most common problem:
  - ❑ 76% of the forces who took part reported at least a monthly sheep attack/worrying by dog incident.
  - ❑ 33% reported weekly incidents.
  - ❑ No force reported never having a sheep attack/worrying by dog incident.
- ❑ Last year's survey of sheep farmer highlighted an increase in the farmers no longer reporting incidents to the police.
- ❑ NSA encourages the critical need for reporting, which would lead to more rural crime teams highlighting sheep attacks by dogs are the major issue, increasing stats. Without stats - NSA, the industry and police can't get policy changed and powers increased.





# Lack of understanding and ignorance from owners around sheep attacks by dogs

- 78% forces who took part reported an increase in sheep attacks/worrying by dogs.
- Rural crime teams are equally frustrated by attacks.
- Dogs off lead and not under control was the main cause of attacks, followed by lack of responsibility, lack of education/understanding and disrespect for livestock and farming.
- This highlights the concern raised in last year's survey of sheep farmers who said it was becoming more common and worryingly becoming the 'norm' for them.





# Number of rural crime teams are increasing and their skillsets and responses are improving

- ❖ 81% rated themselves between 8-10 level confident dealing with a sheep worrying.
- ❖ Length of active rural crime unit ranged from two to 10+ years.
- ❖ Teams are actively engaging in diverse education and awareness raising activities.
- ❖ Engaging in increased communication with rural communities through livestock markets, agricultural shows, actions days to encourage reporting and improve relationship.
- ❖ Promoting dogs on leads in the vicinity of sheep or where there may be sheep grazing.





# Contributor Profile

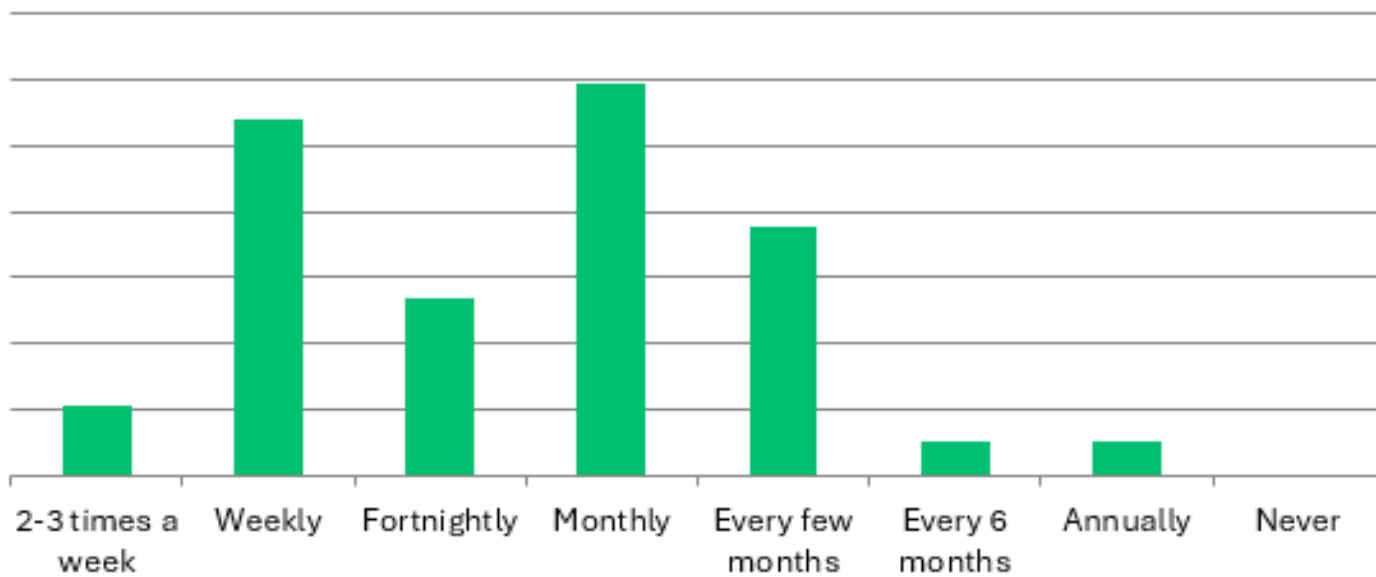
A total of 37 respondents, representing 27 different rural crime teams





# How often police are responding to sheep attacks by dog

On average, how often do you attend sheep worrying incidents throughout the year?



Most forces had attacks at least monthly, with the next top answer being weekly.

This demonstrates that sheep attacks by dogs is a massive problem across the country.

76% of the forces who took part reported at least a monthly sheep attack by dog incident, with 33% of them reporting weekly incidents.

Sadly no forces reported never having a sheep attack/worrying by dog incident and <6% said it occurred infrequently - either every 6 months or annually.

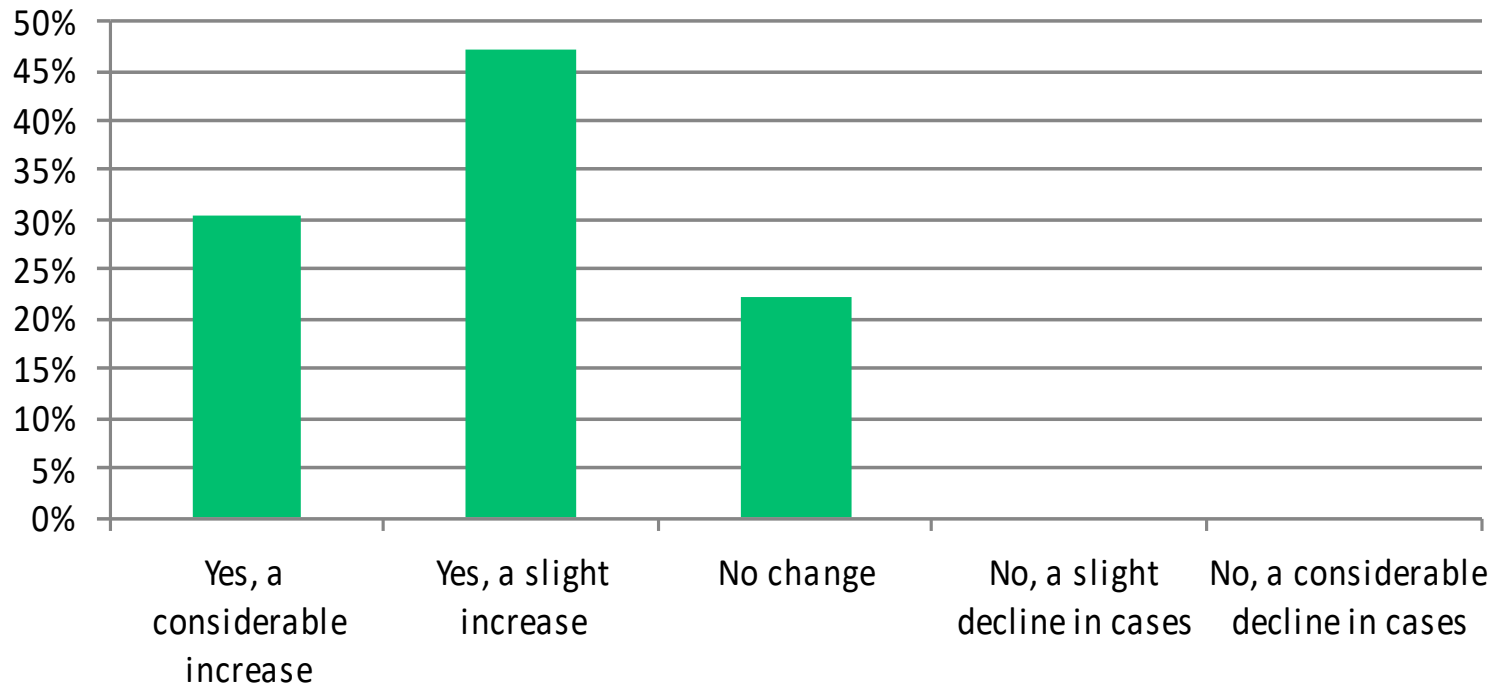




# How common are sheep attacks by dogs?



## Have you seen an increase in sheep worrying cases reported over the past few years?



**78%**  
of police forces reported an increase in sheep worrying by dogs incidents

Highlighting sheep farmers concerns over livestock worrying becoming more common

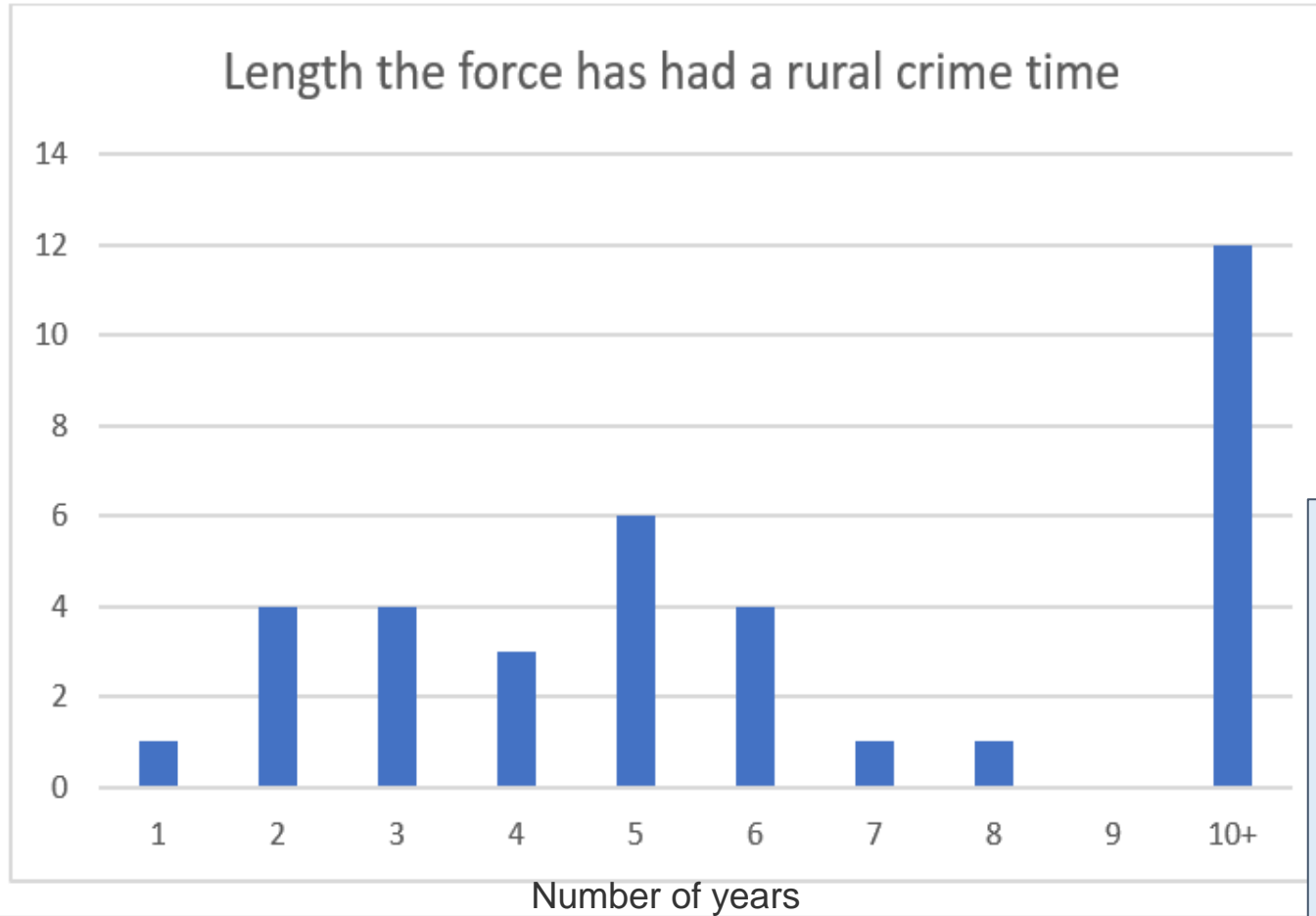


47% reported a slight increase and 31% a considerable increase.

This demonstrates the scale of this problem across the country.



# Rural Crime Team experience



The number of years the force had had a dedicated rural crime team ranged from two to 10+ years. One force reported 20+ years. This demonstrates the range of experience across the different forces.

NSA has been highlighting the need for more specific rural crime teams in all police forces for years. Around five years ago, there wouldn't have been as many specific rural crime teams, meaning the need and desire for more feet on the ground has been heard.

Q2. How long has your force had a Rural Crime Team Unit?



# Rural Crime Teams

feel **confident** dealing with  
**sheep worrying** by dog  
**incidents** so make sure  
**you report ANY**  
**incident.**



National Sheep Association

**#LeadOn**

This is positive news, demonstrating the need for increased engagement with your local rural crime team. NSA stresses the importance of reporting **all** incidents as they occur.

Trends from the survey show those who said they were not as confident were in or close to more urbanised areas, where the public don't understand the consequences of uncontrolled dogs around sheep.

This highlights the need for more education and wider awareness raising, especially where there are protected green areas.

For those who didn't feel as confident - NSA hopes new legislation will assist with this and aims to continue working closely with all rural crime units.

**Q8. On a scale of 1 (not confident) to 10 (very confident) how confident are you at dealing with sheep worrying incidents?**





# Rural crime teams are just as equally frustrated with sheep attacks/worrying by dogs

dismay preventable  
 depressed costly **confident**  
 understanding concern lack of respect  
**disappointed** evidence  
 exsperated **determined**  
 dedicated **frustrated**  
 annoyance distressing **annoyed**  
 empathhtic sad disaster  
**disappointed**



Making them more determined to get a positive outcome for you.

NSA encourages reporting all sheep attack/worrying incidents and engaging with your local rural crime team.

Q9. In three words describe how you feel when attending a sheep worrying incident





This was the results of the 2023 NSA Sheep Worrying by Dog survey completed by sheep farmers. Words also in the police survey are highlighted in red circles.



National Sheep Association

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# Rural crime teams are actively raising awareness on sheep attacks by dogs through...

- Patrols at high footfall dog walking sites
- School visits
- Attending ag shows and local events
- Use of social media
- Collaboration with other organisations



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**Q10. List any initiatives your force is undertaking to reduce sheep worrying**



A few specific example mentioned were:

- 24,000 leaflets on sheep attacks by dogs delivered to local neighbourhood.
- Targeting hotels and air B&B's in areas where tourism is the culprit for sheep attacks
- Giving housing providers useful leaflets on importance of dog control around livestock, which they can give to tenants, with a key message about keeping your dogs secure when at home to prevent escapes from gardens.



# Dogs off lead and not under control was the main cause of sheep attacks/worrying.

1. Dog off lead and not under control while owner present
2. Lack of responsibility
3. Lack of education/understanding
4. Disrespect for livestock/farming
5. Dog escaping from lead

Q11. What do you think are the top three causes of sheep worrying.  
Rate in order of priority.

NSA stresses the importance of putting your dog on the lead in the vicinity of sheep to prevent attacks occurring.

The second most common reason stated was a lack of responsibility and a lack of education/awareness of the consequences.

NSA works tirelessly to raise awareness of the devastation of a sheep attack. The results of this survey also demonstrate positive action from rural crime teams across the country in tackling sheep attacks/worrying by dogs. Collectively we can engage with more dog owners.



# Proactive use of signage was the most successful tool to help prevent attacks.

**SHEEP WORRYING BY DOGS CAN COME IN MANY FORMS.**

Keep your distance from livestock, and ensure dogs are on a lead.

**BARK**



**CHASE**



**BITE**



**KILL**



National Sheep Association  
www.sheepworrying.org.uk

Information and advice can be found at [www.sheepworrying.org.uk](http://www.sheepworrying.org.uk)



NSA recommends using signs while livestock are present and removing them once the stock are no longer grazing to avoid complacency. In the 2023 NSA survey of sheep farmers, 78% said they were using signs, which had increased from previous years survey results.

Raising public awareness through social media, notice boards and talking with dog walkers was also highlighted as a useful tool for raising awareness.

NSA recommends using online noticeboards such as a stock watch page on public sites and on public footpath notice boards as a reminder to dog walkers that livestock may be present.

*Q12. Have you found any successful activity that has reduced / prevented sheep worrying in your area?*





# Majority of forces have a positive response from farmers when responding to an attack



National Sheep Association

## #LeadOn

NSA would encourage farmers to be more upfront with their local police force about their expectations

# 94%

of police forces reported a positive response from sheep farmers when dealing with a sheep worrying incident



The 2023 NSA survey of sheep farmers suggested there was a level of dissatisfaction from farmers when police were dealing with a sheep attack by dogs incidents.

NSA would encourage farmer to be more upfront with their local police force about their expectations. Be honest about what you want and expect from them. Ideally aim to know who your local rural crime team contact is and where possible, attend any events offered.

Having a better relationship with your rural crime team will make reporting easier, it will encourage more reporting which will ultimately lead to better outcomes in the future.

**Q14. What response do you receive from livestock farmers when responding to a report of sheep worrying by dogs?**





# Unanimous vote to keep your dog on a lead in the vicinity of sheep

*Maintain constant control of your dogs either when out walking them or when letting them roam around your property to ensure they do not escape and cause issues.*

*Your dog, your responsibility. Any doubt, put the dog on a lead. Do you know where your dog is right now?*

*Utilise an extending lead or long rope to allow the dog to have the ability to roam while still being under control.*



*You may think your dog isn't capable of attacking a sheep but you can never fully trust that they won't.*

*Ensure your dogs recall is good and always check the field before entering with a dog.*

*keep your dog on a lead around sheep, regardless of how well trained you think the dog is.*

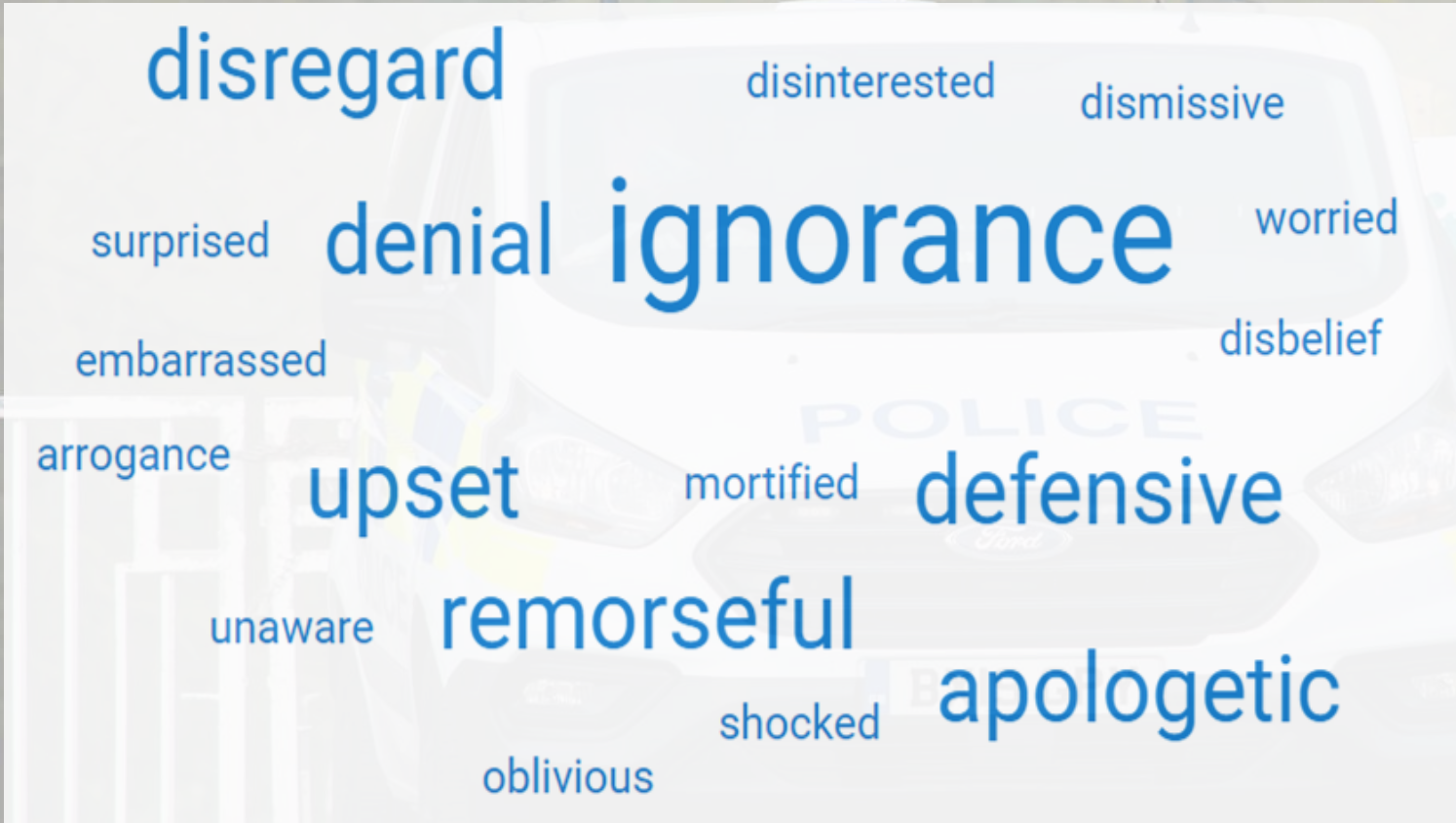
*Dogs should be under effective control at all times and placed on a lead in the vicinity of livestock OR where there is a likelihood livestock could be encountered.*

**Q15. Please provide one piece of advice for dog walkers/owners to prevent sheep worrying**





# Lack of understanding and ignorance came up as top responses



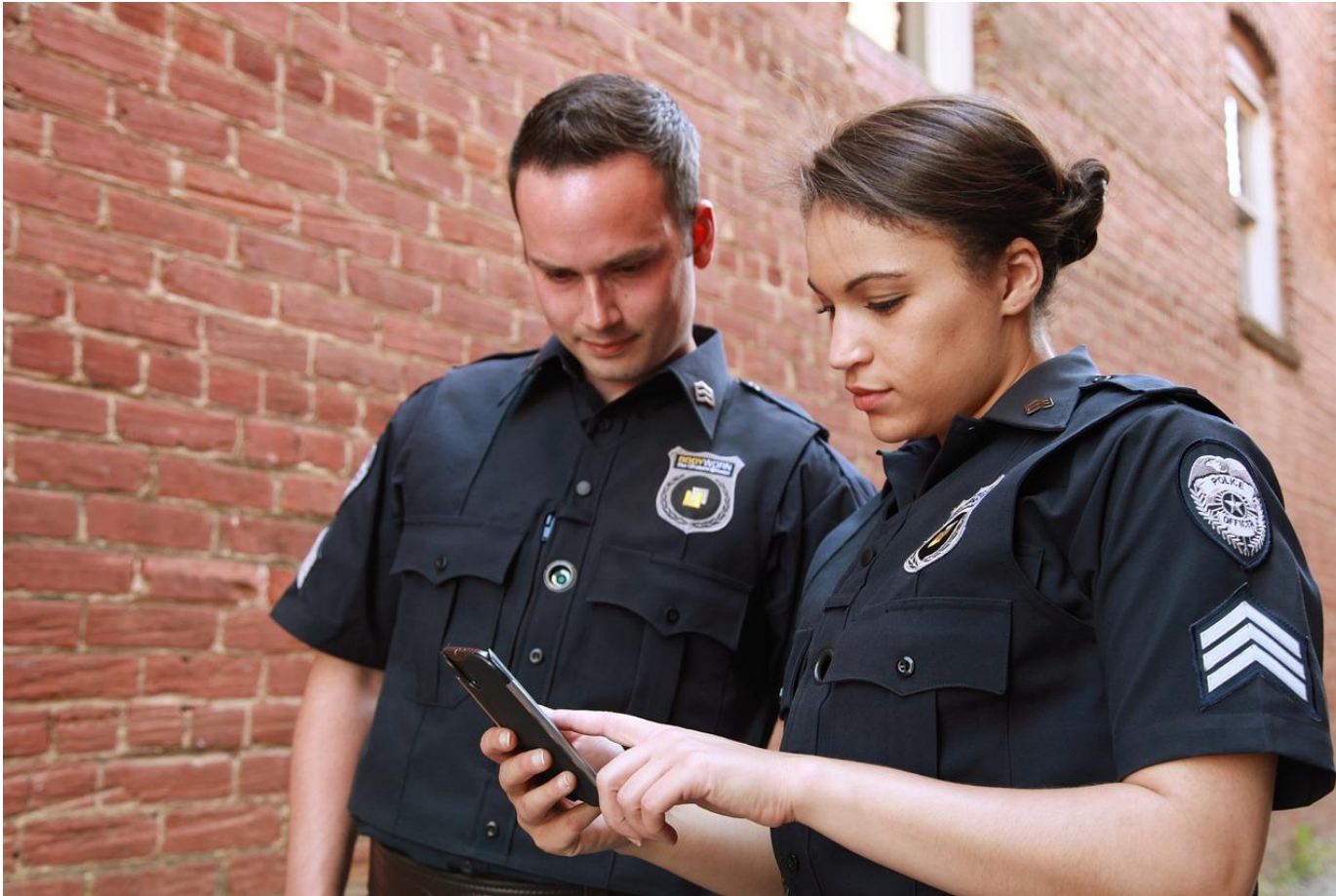
The most common response of dog walkers to rural crime team after a sheep attack by dogs incident highlights the need for more and continued education.

Comments like “my dog wouldn’t do it”, “I have full control”, “it’s never done it before” were specifically mentioned in survey responses.

Q16. What response do you receive from dog owners when responding to a report of sheep worrying?



# The majority of rural teams build relationships with rural communities to encourage reporting



Most forces aim to build a better relationship by attending agricultural shows, livestock markets, organising farm watch meetings and face-to-face events with their rural communities to demonstrate an understanding of the community needs and make themselves more approachable.

The majority of forces also aim to maintain regular contact with the victims of sheep attacks by dogs to provide reassurance action is being taken.

Industry collaborations, such as farming unions was another route used by forces to encourage reporting.

**Q13. How do you encourage farmers to report any incidents of sheep worrying?**



# Be responsible by keeping your dog under control and on a lead around sheep

