

Dog attack prevention – livestock

Dog attacks on livestock can be reduced if livestock owners take precautions and notify others after an attack.

Definition of a Dog Attack

The *Dog Act 1976* interprets an “attack” to be aggressively rushing at or harassing any person or animal; or biting, or otherwise causing physical injury to, a person or animal; or tearing clothing on, or otherwise causing damage to the property of, the person attacked; or attempting to attack, or behaving in such a manner toward a person as would cause a reasonable person to fear injury.

How to prevent dog attacks

Don't encourage dogs to visit. Many livestock owners ignore or even encourage dogs wandering onto their property. They may appear harmless, but the dogs could return when no one is home or at night. Dogs other than resident dogs should not be tolerated if they are wandering, even if they belong to a neighbour.

Don't allow dogs to play with livestock. During play dogs learn the hunting skills for later attacks. Many farmers have had to destroy their own or a neighbour's dog that they thought was harmless.

Be ready at all times. You cannot predict when and where dogs will attack. Timing depends on whether dogs are unrestrained at night or released when their owners get up. Seasonally, most attacks occur between March and October, possibly because dogs are less active in the warmer weather or because there are more sheep in the area. Attacks occur in all weathers, but appear to increase after a change from warmer to cooler temperatures and with the onset of rain.

Check your boundaries. Check boundaries regularly, keep all gates closed and fences repaired. Dogs will enter via open gates, and through, under and over the weakest parts of fences.

Review your management plan. Many livestock owners don't change their management plan, even after repeated attacks.

You should have a pen or secure area where livestock can be confined. Alternatively, keep animals close to the house.

Listen for the signs. Don't ignore disturbances during the night. The sounds of livestock running, prolonged barking by your own dog, or geese and ducks making noises may indicate an attack.

Check your livestock. Attacks are often discovered hours or days later. Check and count your livestock each morning for minor injuries and behaviour changes. Changes may include a flock scattering or huddling in small groups, staying close to the house or avoiding parts of the paddock or farm. Livestock will be nervous of dogs after being harassed.

Use other animals as protection. Other livestock, such as donkeys, cattle and horses, can be used to protect sheep and goats if kept in the same paddock with them. Dogs have been used to guard livestock with mixed success, but require a lot of training and supervision. It is important to select a dog from a breeder who provides information and advice on how to do this.

What to do if your livestock are attacked

Notify each attack. If you find evidence of a dog attack on your livestock, notify the City of Swan on **9267 9267**. City Officers can only investigate attacks where dogs are involved. Attacks where foxes kill lambs or poultry are the responsibility of the Agriculture Protection Board. Information on differentiating between attacks by foxes and dogs is available from the board. Visit **www.agric.wa.gov.au** for more details.

For additional details, please visit the City's website **www.swan.wa.gov.au** or call the City of Swan on **9267 9267**.