

Livestock Guardian Dog use in Ontario

Predation is a significant cost and ongoing threat to sheep flocks in Ontario. Preventative measures are the first line of defense for producers. Livestock Guardian Dogs are one of the most effective preventative measures available because they are actively protecting the flock 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Livestock Guardian Dogs have been used in Ontario since the 1960's. Their use has increased in the past 40 years as the province's coyote population has increased and expanded throughout the entire province. Livestock Guardian Dog are now used by a great majority of sheep producers in Ontario to protect their flocks from predation by (primarily) coyotes, but also wolves, bears and other wildlife.

Livestock Guardian Dogs live with the sheep flock.

They provide protection to the flock by patrolling pastures, marking the perimeter of their territory. They also bark, run at, and try to intimidate any threats to the livestock they are protecting, which in this case is sheep.

Barking is one of the primary means by which livestock guardian dogs provide protection to the sheep flock. It is their way of communicating with other canines, and the guarding bark warns predators to avoid the area. Because dogs' sense of smell and hearing are many times more acute than that of humans, they often appear to be "barking" at nothing, when in fact, they hear, or smell something that humans are not able to.

Except perhaps for sheep flocks totally confined to barns with no access to outdoors, very few sheep flocks would survive predation attacks if it weren't for the effectiveness of livestock guardian dogs.

Ontario Sheep Farmers (OSF) considers the use of livestock guardian dogs to provide protection to livestock against predation as a normal farm practice.

The Farm and Food Production Protection Act (administered by Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs) defines normal farm practice as a farming practice which:

- is consistent with proper, acceptable customs and standards of similar operations; or
- uses innovative technology according to proper, advanced farm management practices.

The Farm and Food Production Protection Act was established to promote and protect agricultural uses and normal farm practices in agricultural areas, in a way that balances the needs of the agricultural community with provincial health, safety and environmental concerns.

