

DO YOU KNOW THAT

It is an offence to allow a dog to worry sheep.

*Worrying includes attacking or chasing sheep
and, in some circumstances,
farmers are legally entitled to shoot dogs
if they are endangering their sheep.*

Below you will find a few key points of legislation affecting dogs around sheep in England and Wales, to help you feel confident that you and your pet are staying within the law when in farming areas

Farmers appreciate lots of people like their dog to enjoy the countryside with them, but as much of the UK's rural landscape is maintained by grazing sheep there is always a strong chance you will encounter some while out with your dog.

***The information and advice below
will help you and your pet have fun and safe days out
without disrupting the important work of sheep farmers.***

***You should also read this advice
if you are a dog owner living in or near a farming area,
as escaped dogs can be a real problem for farmers.***

***And it is also useful for us all to be aware
so we can inform others who, for some reason, are unaware
that it is an offence to allow a dog to worry sheep.***



Sheep are valuable assets

And any harm to them, harms a farmer's livelihood.

It is every dog's instinct to chase, even if they are usually obedient and good with other animals!

*Chasing by dogs can do **serious damage** to sheep, even if the dog doesn't catch them.*

The stress of worrying by dogs can cause sheep to die and pregnant ewes to miscarry their lambs!

Sheep fleeing from dogs are often killed or seriously injured by their panicked attempts to escape, causing untold damage to fences and field boundaries in the process.

Dogs chasing ewes and lambs can cause mis-mothering issues, with lambs dying from starvation or hypothermia when they become separated from their mother and fail to find her again.

Dog bites can cause death in sheep or necessitate them being put down at a later date, or in less severe cases considerable veterinary bills and additional welfare issues as a result of flies being attracted to the blood and leading to a nasty health problem in sheep called 'fly strike'. Injuries to sheep can also delay the normal farming routine, be it the mating season or administration of vital medicines and vaccines.

**Under the
Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953
if a dog worries sheep on agricultural land
the person in charge of the dog is guilty of an offence.**

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/1-2/28>

- The Act considers sheep worrying to include attacking sheep, chasing them in a way that may cause injury, suffering, abortion or loss of produce or being at large (***not on a lead or otherwise under close control***) in a field or enclosure in which there are sheep.
- Sheep escaped from their keep that are still on agricultural land are still protected by this act.
- Sheep escaped that have escaped and are off of agricultural land can no longer be protected by this act.
- Sheep that have escaped onto amenity land should be reported to the local council.
- If there is concern sheep can and/or have escaped onto a highway or there is a concern that the escaping sheep may injure themselves or be suffering a welfare concern, the County Council Trading Standards team should be contacted as the principle agency for regulating livestock welfare.

[Find out more about 'Staying legal in England and Wales'](#)

<https://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/dog-owners/sheep-worrying/2457/staying-legal-in-england-and-wales/>

The Countryside and Right of Way Act (CROW Act)

sets out public rights of access to open land and the restrictions to these rights.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents>

- **Although CROW allows anyone on to open access land** (land you can access without having to use paths, including mountains, moorland, heaths, downs and registered common land) for recreation, **the Act states that the public can only go on this land if they keep dogs on a fixed lead of 2 metres or less near livestock.**
- The owner of open access land can close areas containing sheep to dogs for up to six weeks once a year, as a safeguard during lambing.
- Trained guide and hearing dogs are still allowed in these areas during this closure.

The Countryside Code in England and Wales

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code>

The Countryside Code offers advice on walking your dog near livestock, as well as other information on how to enjoy a safe and responsible trip to a rural area in England and Wales.

Excerpts from the Countryside Code say:

- “When you take your dog into the outdoors always ensure it does not disturb wildlife, farm animals, horses or other people by keeping it under effective control ...
- It is always good practice to keep your dog on a lead around farm animals ...
- Keep your dog in sight at all times, be aware of what it’s doing and be confident it will return to you promptly on command ...
- Ensure it does not stray off the path or area where you have a right of access.”
- The Code also reminds walkers that a farmer ‘may shoot a dog which is attacking or chasing farm animals without being liable to compensate the dog’s owner’.