

# **Preventing wolf damage with livestock guarding dogs: results from different regions and husbandry systems in Portugal**

Silvia Ribeiro & Francisco Petrucci-Fonseca

Grupo Lobo, Faculdade de Ciências de Lisboa, Edifício C2, 1749-016 Lisboa, Portugal

## **Abstract**

The return of wolves to their former ranges across Europe is good news for biodiversity, but may conflict with established interests, bringing back to the fore old conflicts between those pro and against wolf presence. Agricultural policies that promote husbandry systems that do not take the presence of wolves into account, and end up facilitating predation, are to blame. But conflicts are not only based on economic issues, but also on deep-rooted conceptions of the interactions between man and nature. But if willingness and the proper incentives exist, new solutions can be sought and implemented that can help prevent damage on livestock. Demonstration projects, exchange of experiences as well as long-term support actions are key to change practices in those regions, and can greatly benefit from the right financial and legal framework.

Results from the LIFE MedWolf project (LIFE11NAT/IT/069) and the LGD Program, implemented by Grupo Lobo since 1996, will be presented. Since 2014, within the MedWolf project nearly 30 livestock guarding dogs (LGD) were donated to livestock breeders in the Portuguese study area, including the eastern range of the Iberian wolf population south of the Douro river, along the border with Spain. In the scope of the LGD Program more than 500 dogs from autochthonous breeds were placed in herds and flocks throughout the Portuguese wolf range. Advantages of using LGDs as well as technical problems and solutions will be highlighted for the different husbandry systems and regions. Although challenging in very extensive systems of livestock production, the use of LGDs is adaptable to various situations and combinable with other measures to increase efficiency. The support to long-term actions and the development of concrete actions made possible by the LIFE Program represents a good opportunity to walk the path towards a better coexistence with the wolf.

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