

## **Recovery of Traditional Techniques of Livestock Protection from Wolf Predation in Portugal**

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### **Abstract**

Different techniques were traditionally developed by shepherds to reduce wolves' predation on livestock. The most widespread was the use of Livestock Guarding Dogs (LGD). Nevertheless, in the last decades the use of LGDs decreased and the knowledge on their education is being lost. In Portugal, Grupo Lobo initiated a project to recover the use of LGDs and contribute to the conservation of the endangered Iberian wolf by reducing man-wolf conflicts deriving from wolf damages on livestock. Since 1998 forty dogs from two Portuguese breeds of LGDs were placed in flocks in the North and Centre of the country, where the wolf still exists. Their behavioural development was monitored until adulthood and their efficiency evaluated. Since the criteria of the amount of damages is influenced by several factors difficult to assess, for a correct evaluation of LGDs performance a behavioural analysis should be considered. Most of the adult dogs (83%) are trustworthy and attentive to the flock and proved to be efficient in preventing wolf predation. Inquiries to shepherds have revealed the use of other protection methods until 1950, namely different types of light-mobile barriers, similar to fladry, a technique traditionally used in Eastern Europe for hunting wolves. These recent findings increase the trust on the use of fladry as a prevention method for wolf predation. The implementation of traditional methods of livestock protection emerge as a valid contribution to wolf conservation strategies worldwide.

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