

Position paper

LIVESTOCK FARMING AND THE WOLF IN GERMANY

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1. Recommendations for nationwide standards for livestock protection against wolves

There is currently a patchwork of standards and recommendations in Germany for livestock protection. Neither technical implementation nor funding are regulated within a national framework. Also, there are no clear rules for the killing of a wolf that overcomes herd protection measures and attacks livestock, although the removal of such problematic wolves under current nature conservation law is possible. Some federal states therefore criticize inadequate legal clarity concerning wolves and livestock protection. A framework regulation from the federal government could create more security and contribute to sustainable coexistence. Its consistent implementation would be up to the federal states. In the following, the signatory associations recommend standards for livestock protection as well as for the removal of individual wolves showing problematic behaviour and call upon the federal government to create the legal and regulatory basis for their practical implementation.

According to the current state of knowledge, the measures described in the appendix guarantee suffi-



First German Network Meeting and press conference.

(Photo: NABU/V. Gehrman)

cient protection of livestock against attacks by wolves. The recommended standards should therefore be adopted throughout the country in areas with wolf occurrence. They should be implemented according to best professional practice and practicability. In this context, it is important to begin the development of livestock protection in potential wolf areas before the first wolf settles and to define areas with proven wolf presence rapidly in accordance with the relevant funding guidelines. There is an urgent need for improvement in both aspects in the federal states.

2. Support for livestock protection

The additional expenditure resulting from the presence of wolves for material and personnel costs for the recommended livestock protection measures should be financed 100% by State aid, especially since the obstacles in European State aid law have now been removed¹. This aid should be paid to all farmers concerned, irrespective of their employment status or herd size.

3. Compensation for killed livestock

Cost-covering compensation for the consequences of attacks on livestock in regions with proven wolf presence should be paid by the federal states if the farm had implemented the recommended standard of protection and the wolf was not excluded as the cause of damage. In other areas, compensation should be paid if the wolf was likely to be the cause.

4. Removal of wolves

The removal of wolves is always a case-by-case decision and does not replace the need for comprehensive livestock protection measures. If a wolf repeatedly overcomes properly implemented livestock protection measures according to the standards recommended by the signatory associations and repeatedly attacks farm animals, it may be necessary for the respective competent state authority to grant an exemption permit for its killing after the legally necessary examination of the individual case in order to prevent further damage. The wolf to be removed must be sufficiently clearly identified or caught during an attack on protected livestock. Removals should be carried out by specialists commissioned by the authorities.

A removal is appropriate in individual cases after at least one of the following:

- one overcoming of a measure of standard protection followed by a further overcoming of a measure of increased protection, *or*
- one overcoming of a measure of increased protection, *or*
- one attack during active herding of a flock, for example by shepherding.

¹ Editor's note: see Katrina Marsden's article on *Changes to State aid: European guidelines for financing compensation measures* in *CDPnews* issue 18.

Interview with Moritz Klose

Wolves and livestock protection can go hand in hand in Germany

In July 2019, 11 non-governmental associations from the fields of agriculture, livestock husbandry, nature conservation, animal welfare and hunting published a position paper calling for common standards for livestock protection across all federal states in Germany. *CDPnews* talked to WWF Germany's Moritz Klose, one of the authors of the paper.

How long did it take to reach consensus among such a varied group of partners?

Our alliance has been discussing the need for a joint position paper since we first got together in 2017. It took several months to finalize the document and agree on key recommendations for nationwide livestock protection standards and criteria for the management of wolves showing problematic behaviour. As you can imagine, the removal of wolves is quite a touchy subject, but we managed to agree on recommendations for how to deal with individual wolves that repeatedly cause damage to properly protected livestock. In essence, this means that if a wolf gets into a flock of sheep more than once, even though proper protection measures were in place, the wolf should be removed.

What are the main criticisms of livestock protection and wolf management in Germany?

Our associations are critical of the practical and legal uncertainty that often prevails in Germany when it comes to managing wolf-livestock conflicts. There is a confusing patchwork of different recommendations and standards for the adaptation and promotion of livestock protection measures. In addition, although it is possible to legally kill individual wolves that overcome recommended livestock protection measures and attack livestock, there is a lack of clear criteria and procedures for how this should be done. This 'federal confusion' is at the expense of both conservationists and livestock owners.

What is your alliance demanding?

We don't want politicians and society to offset ecologically valuable livestock grazing against the ecologically valuable return of the wolf. Mitigating the impacts of the return of the wolf should be considered a societal responsibility and livestock owners must not be left alone with the challenges they face.

Our alliance is calling for a framework of regulations from the federal government to foster sustainable coexistence between wolves and livestock farming. In contrast to the planned amendment to the Federal Nature Conservation Act, our position paper focuses on substantive and practicable approaches and provides concrete recommendations for the nationwide implementation of suitable livestock protection in current and potential wolf areas.

We demand a cost-covering state subsidy, which also includes ongoing maintenance costs of, for example, livestock guarding dogs. Our associations regard the killing of wolves that show problematic behaviour as a last resort. We agree that the need for good livestock protection is unavoidable. The Ministry of the Environment and above all the Ministry of Agriculture must work together to achieve this.

Is support available to livestock owners to implement protection measures?

The European Commission has created legal frameworks and funding schemes for member states to promote and support livestock protection measures. In Germany, most federal states already offer funding for protection measures. The federal government and states must now act urgently. Our associations agreed that not only the initial investment costs for fences and dogs should be paid by the states but also the cost for keeping dogs and maintaining the fences. For example, currently existing agri-environmental schemes could be expanded to offset maintenance costs.

Appendix: Recommendations for protection standards

1. Standard protection

Relevance: animal welfare protection law, damage compensation for livestock killing by wolves

1.1 Grazing of sheep and goats

- Fences with at least four electrified wires or electric netting, in each case with a minimum construction-related height of 90 cm, a maximum height above the ground of the lowest current-carrying wire of 20 cm and a minimum voltage of 2500 volts; *or*
- Fixed fences made of mesh wire, hinge-joint fencing or similar material, with a construction-related minimum height of 120 cm and protection to prevent wolves from digging under the fence; *or*
- Active herding, for example by shepherding.

1.2 Grazing of farmed deer

- Fixed fences made of mesh wire, hinge-joint fencing or similar material, with a construction-related minimum height of 180 cm and protection to prevent wolves from getting under the fence.

1.3 Grazing of cattle, horses, donkeys and ponies

Cattle and horses are much less affected by wolf attacks than sheep, goats or farmed deer. Comprehensive protection is not absolutely necessary. For this reason, damage compensation should be paid in the event of wolf attacks if herding containment (escape proof) is guaranteed.

- Fences with at least two current-carrying wires, a construction-related minimum height of 90 cm and a minimum voltage of 2500 volts.

2. Increased protection

Relevance: Decision to remove a wolf

2.1 Grazing of sheep and goats

- Fences with at least five electrified wires or electric netting, in each case with a minimum construction-related height of 90 cm, a maximum height

above the ground of the lowest current-carrying wire of 20 cm and a minimum voltage of 2500 volts; *or*

- Electric netting with a minimum construction-related height of 90 cm reaching an overall construction-related height of at least 120 cm using electric fence tape or other wide tape as well as a minimum voltage of 2500 volts; *or*
- Fixed fences made of mesh wire, hinge-joint fencing or similar material, with a construction-related minimum height of 120 cm and protection to prevent wolves from getting under the fence and reaching an overall construction-related height of at least 160 cm using additional current-carrying wire and wide tape if appropriate; *or*
- Fences with at least four current-carrying wires or electric netting, in each case with a minimum construction-related height of 90 cm, maximum height above the ground of the lowest current-carrying wire of 20 cm and a minimum voltage of 2500 volts and, depending on the size of area and flock, two or more adult, tested² livestock guarding dogs per flock; *or*
- Active herding, for example by shepherding.

2.2 Grazing of farmed deer

- Fixed fences made of mesh wire, hinge-joint fencing or similar material, with a construction-related minimum height of 180 cm and protection to prevent wolves from getting under the fence and a current-carrying wire on top of the fence with a minimum voltage of 2500 volts.

2.3 Grazing of cattle, horses and donkeys with calves or foals and ponies

In regions where wolves repeatedly attack cattle, horses or donkeys, protective measures should be applied throughout the area to be defined.

According to the current state of knowledge, the signatory associations recommend:

- Fences with at least five current-carrying wires with a minimum construction-related height of 120 cm, a maximum height above the ground of the lowest current-carrying wire of 20 cm and a minimum voltage of 2500 volts.

² Editor's note: 'tested dogs' are experienced in protecting livestock, preferably having been certified by one of the German associations for livestock guarding dogs. Within the certification process, dogs are tested for different behaviours, e.g. if they can be integrated into a new herd or if they show any unwanted behaviour such as aggression towards livestock.