

acquired the habit of assembling the sheep every evening. Obviously, a donkey is very vigilant at night. At the least suspicious sound or smell, it starts to bray. Its voice can be so loud that it may be heard over several kilometres – so there may be some problems with the neighbours. Donkeys have shown to be very discouraging to dogs which roam around the pen (tourists' dogs). A donkey is able to recognise dogs from a far distance and to warn the sheep, which then will be less surprised by the sudden coming of a canid.

The donkey is able to run away and at the same time kick with one or both of its hind hoofs, then turn quickly and rush at the dog with its head lowered, and ears flattened on its nape. I know two cases, where a dog (a German shepherd dog and a hunting dog) were killed by a donkey in a mountain pasture when harassing the sheep. The donkey's aversion to canids is so strong that one has to be careful when using a herd dog to tend the sheep. However, in two flocks, we managed to have a donkey together with livestock guard dogs (a St-Bernard and a Great Pyrenees). Even more, the unlike animals are sometimes playing together.

The donkey normally stays with the sheep, but when at a mountain pasture, the slope is too steep, it is not capable of following them everywhere. Especially tall donkeys show this handicap. Several farmers kept their donkeys in lower parts of the pasture because they feared that the animal might fall. If the herd divides into several groups, the donkey visits them by turns, or stays constantly with one group. The use of several donkeys in a herd is not to be recommended because they tend to stay together and neglect the contact with the sheep.

Several farmers had problems with tourists who liked to feed the donkey and hence distracted it from its task. One donkey, however, used to rush at people who approached the enclosure.

From the first results, a donkey appears to be a good solution to protect small flocks of sheep (< 50 heads) in an enclosure. The presence of a donkey in a pen frightens people less than a large dog. Furthermore, it is not necessary to feed the donkey daily, unlike the dog. It is however, too early to conclude about the use of the donkey as a guard animal in the Alps. Its effectiveness against wolves is not yet known. Furthermore, livestock guard dogs remain the only preventive system valid for large herds.

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Should Life condition all co-financing of compensation systems to the use of preventive methods?

I think that we should divide the question "Should LIFE condition all co-financing ...etc." into two separate ones: One regarding Compensation payments through conservation projects (like LIFE projects) and another one regarding Compensation which is paid for damages through National or Regional systems (run by public authorities or other funds).

According to my opinion the answer to the question concerning the conservation projects is that, yes, LIFE should condition all co-financing to the use of preventive methods. My main reasoning for this answer is that compensation is a passive strategy, since it does not create incentives for the reduction of damage and it does not include other educational and policy tools.

However, the same question is differentiated concerning individual farmers who exercise agriculture within a range of different land types or socio-economic and environmental conditions: In some European mountainous and less favoured areas low intensity farming systems may be incompatible with the high cost of implementing some of these measures. In general, in these areas the farmers' income is lower and the cost of production is higher than in others where intensive farming systems are applicable. On the other hand, the small size or the structure of holdings which dominate the low intensity systems of agriculture and pastoralism presents further difficulties to the implementation of such measures. Consequently, a large portion of farmers would be excluded from compensation systems which are conditioned to the use of preventive measures and this,

in turn, would possibly increase the human caused mortality of certain animal species, the large carnivores included.

According to my opinion, the European Commission (and, consequently, LIFE) should politically and financially support the application of both compensation systems and prevention methods concerning large predators and other protected species. In this frame, public authorities should be encouraged and supported to envisage assumption of all or part of the cost of the most appropriate preventive measures, especially for the animals belonging to species which are protected. Clear and explicit discrimination and exception of an endangered species of European interest from the general rules that stands for compensation or prevention of damages caused by other reasons (e.g. damages caused by common game species), handle such an animal as “res omnium” (property of all) not as “res nullius” (property of nobody). Namely, it is the state and the whole society that are responsible for it (including damages) and this could be used as a political and educational tool.

In conclusion, LIFE should not follow a strict policy but rather a more flexible and sensible one compatible with the particularities and differences within the European diverse reality: While preventive measures should be supported and encouraged, the conditions for co-financing compensation to certain farmers should not be limited exclusively to the use of preventive measures but, preferably, should be differentiated according to land-use types, the extent of (intensive or extensive) farming systems, the size and structure of holdings, the farmers income, other socio-economic conditions, as well as the general aims and the specific objectives of nature conservation in the respective regions/areas.

In the frame of this policy, LIFE should support application of a combined use of compensation systems with prevention methods and should encourage public authorities to cover all or part of the cost of the most appropriate preventive measures. To implement such a policy and given that LIFE is the only Community financial instrument for the environment, with a tiny budget compared with other European Commission financial instruments, other sources of subsidy for preventive measures should also be envisaged: The CAP accompanying measures, the Cohesion Fund or the Structural Funds could also be used for such purposes.

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The Recovery of Livestock Guarding Dogs' use and the Iberian Wolf Conservation in Portugal - Promising results

Originally distributed throughout the Iberian Peninsula, the Iberian Wolf (*Canis lupus signatus* Cabrera, 1907) is presently restricted to the North-west regions. In Portugal, where the species is fully protected by law since 1988, its population has been decreasing rapidly, mainly after the 70's. Nowadays the wolf occurs only in less than 25% of its original distribution area, in the most mountainous and less populated areas of the North and Centre of the country, where it can still find refuge and food. The main cause of regression is illegal persecution by man, namely shepherds, motivated by the damages wolves cause to livestock. In fact, the wolf diet is based almost exclusively on domestic animals (mainly sheep and goat), due to the low numbers of natural prey like roe deer and red deer. Thus, by reducing livestock damages caused by wolves, we are effectively contributing to a better acceptance of this predator. The best solution to this problem seems to be the traditional one – the use of Livestock Guarding Dogs (LGD). Although part of the traditional grazing system, the use of LGD is falling out of use, not only in Portugal but all over Eurasia. These dogs, selected by shepherds during hundreds of years, are very effective in livestock protection against predators. Currently, however, the Portuguese LGD breeds are becoming very scarce and most of them are used mainly as pets or show dogs. This situation is of great concern because the selection is based only on morphologic characteristics, disregarding the functional, behavioural and genetic aspects. Being aware of this, Grupo Lobo initiated in 1996 a new line of action which aims to rehabilitate the use of LGD as a measure of wolf conservation. At the same time, Grupo Lobo is also contributing to the recovery of the Portuguese LGD breeds – the Estrela Mountain Dog (Cão da Serra da Estrela), the Castro Laboreiro Watchdog (Cão de Castro Laboreiro) and the Alentejo Shepherd Dog (Rafeiro do Alentejo). The project operates in two different levels: one is concerned with the correct development of the dogs' behaviour and physical condition; the other focuses on the analysis of the inbreeding coefficient for each breed, based on genetic studies. A previous selection of the shepherds was made, according to some criteria as the amount of damages and the interest to participate in the project. The selection of the pups to be