

***American Sheep Industry Association***  
***Certification Program For Livestock Protection & Herding Dogs***  
***(Draft Document Prepared by Bryce Reece & Bonnie Brown)***

**Introduction**

Over the last several decades, predator management tools available to the sheep industry have been significantly curtailed, and completely eliminated in some circumstances. With the loss of traditional predator management tools, livestock protection dogs have become an extremely important means to reduce predator attacks on sheep. Livestock protection dogs (LPDs) have been used around the world for centuries, and have been widely used in the United States since the 1970's. Heavy recreational use on federal lands that have been historically used for sheep grazing, and continually expanding rural/urban interface areas, have combined to create occasional conflicts between recreationalists and livestock protection dogs, and livestock protection dogs and neighbors in rural/urban interface areas.

ASI strongly believes that the use of LPDs on federal grazing allotments is in serious jeopardy, and anticipates three possible outcomes: 1) Federal agencies develop their own mandatory regulations for the use of LPDs on grazing allotments; 2) Federal agencies completely eliminate the use of LPDs on grazing allotments; or 3) ASI takes a proactive management position and adopts a stringent LPD certification program that sets high industry standards for the use of LPDs with the intent to effectively manage and maintain the use of LPDs on federal grazing allotments.

Farm flock owners are also subject to potential restrictions on use of LPDs because of occasional conflicts with neighbors.

The purpose of the ASI Certification Program is to encourage sheep producers using livestock protection dogs and herding dogs to adhere to best management practices (BMPs) that optimize the use of these dogs while minimizing potential conflicts with neighbors and recreational users of federal lands. Throughout the certification program, the term livestock protection dog (LPD) is used and is meant to include herding dogs as well. LPD owners must complete the certification program annually to maintain a current certified status. LPD owners must also be a member of their ASI-affiliated state sheep association (if applicable) in order to participate in the certification program.

**Program Benefits**

In the event that an LPD owner is involved in an incident, participation in the certification program should demonstrate that the LPD owner adheres to industry approved standards and should help deflect claims of negligence. Additionally, program participation and certification should be a cornerstone to maintain positive working relationships with agency staff while managing grazing allotments and improve relationship with neighbors that may encounter LPDs.

Participation in the certification program is a positive public relations tool for both the individual participant and the industry overall.

Upon successful completion of ASI's Certification Program For Livestock Protection & Herding Dogs, program participants will receive the following benefits:

- ✓ Opportunity to purchase ASI's low-cost supplemental LPD insurance coverage ...
- ✓ LPD information signs (first 6 signs are free; additional signs can be purchased for \$\$)
- ✓ LPD owner information cards (could ASI pre-print these based on the information provided when signing up for the certification program, and then ASI could send the owner cards, the cards could state that the owner has completed the certification program.....seems a little more tailored than just handing out a business card....first 25-50 cards free, additional cards could be ordered for \$\$)
- ✓ Vaccination & health record book (must be maintained as a component of the certification program.....this is probably the only component that we could actually monitor if they had to annually submit a copy to ASI showing ID #, spay/neuter, vaccination, worming record) or develop computer program for tracking this information
- ✓ Plastic packets to store rabies certificates, information cards, etc in.
- ✓ LPD brochures

### **Legal Aspects of LPD Ownership**

- ✓ LPD owners need to familiarize themselves with state and local laws and ordinances regarding ownership of dogs and "dogs at large"; requirements of dog owners; vaccination requirements; liability of dog owners when their dogs are involved in conflicts with humans, domestic animals or conflicts with wildlife.
- ✓ Owners need to ensure that all applicable State and County laws or statutes are complied with in regard to the ownership and control of LPDs.
- ✓ Owners need to discuss liability issues with their insurance carrier and make sure they are adequately covered with liability insurance to cover any conflict situations between LPDs and humans, domestic animals and wildlife. Operators should maintain sufficient liability insurance as required by either state law, federal requirements or as the situation necessitates.

### **Health Management Requirements**

- ✓ LPD owners are required to have one of the following types of identification on each of their dogs: collar and ID tag, microchip, tattoo or ear tag.
- ✓ LPD owners are required to maintain proof of current rabies vaccinations for each LPD. Copies of the rabies certificates (issued by a licensed veterinarian) must be kept at the sheep camp or readily accessible locations at all times.
- ✓ Sexually intact male LPDs will not be used on federal grazing allotments.
- ✓ Adequate food and water for LPDs will be available at all times.

### **Health Management (BMPs)**

- ✓ Paint brands may be used as a supplemental identification method as long as the brands are adequately refreshed in order to assure that ownership of the LPD can be ascertained.

- ✓ LPD owners should spay females, unless the dog is used for breeding purposes.
- ✓ LPD owners should vaccinate dogs for distemper, hepatitis, parvo and leptospirosis.
- ✓ De-worming for canine specific internal parasites, as well as ovine cysticercosis, is highly recommended.
- ✓ Do not let dogs feed on sheep carcasses.
- ✓ Shearing/clipping/grooming of LPDs should be done to prevent matted coats and to prevent overheating in the summer.
- ✓ Sheep producers should not breed LPDs unless they have the time and ability to train the puppies, and a known market to place excess puppies. Purchasing individually trained LPDs from reputable breeders is highly recommended as an alternative to raising pups when producers do not have time, expertise and ability to raise and train LPD pups.

### **Livestock Protection Dog Training & Management (Requirements)**

- ✓ LPDs that show aggressive behavior towards people or other restrained (leashed) dogs will not be allowed to work on federal lands or private property if the possibility exists for the dogs to stray from the private property.
- ✓ LPDs that continually stray away from the sheep will not be allowed to work on federal lands.
- ✓ LPDs must be trained to respond to basic voice commands. Dogs that cannot be controlled by voice commands will not be allowed to work on federal lands.
- ✓ LPDs that cannot be easily caught and leashed will not be allowed to work on federal lands.
- ✓ LPDs must be socialized to people. They need to be trained so that vehicles, ATVs, hikers (with or without a dog) and bikers do not appear in the dog's mind to pose a threat to the sheep.
- ✓ LPDs should be tied up on federal lands if a herder is not present and there is the potential for contact between people and the LPD.
- ✓ LPDs should be accounted for and never left behind when moving sheep. If dogs become separated from their sheep, a priority should be placed on recovering the dog within 24 hours of discovering that the dog is missing.
- ✓ LPD owners will train their dogs to stay on their property while patrolling for predators when sheep are held within fenced pastures. LPD owners will contact adjacent neighbors and explain that LPD's are being used to protect livestock, how LPD's behave when they are performing this function and, that if a predator is approaching or threatening the sheep, the LPD may chase the predator off of the property. If a LPD has left the owner's property, the owner should take immediate action to find their LPD and bring it home.

### **Livestock Protection Dog Training & Management (BMPs)**

- ✓ LPDs that show aggressive behavior towards people or other restrained (leashed) dogs should not be retained for breeding purposes.
- ✓ LPDs that continually stray away off private property and that cannot be easily caught and leashed should not be used.

- ✓ LPD owners should strive to identify LPDs that exhibit targeted aggressiveness toward predators combined with compatibility with people. Sheep producers should consider the various breed of dogs (each with breed specific traits—can we provide a summary sheet of the different breeds, traits, suitability for different working conditions?) as well as individual dogs and their personalities in relationship to the kinds of predators to be encountered, as well as the probability of human (including pet dogs, horses, etc.) encounters. Sheep producers should strive for the minimum level of aggressiveness that will protect the flock and yet be compatible with the general public which may come into contact with the LPD.
- ✓ In areas of heavy recreational use, it may be necessary to tie up LPDs during the day.
- ✓ In areas where potential exists for conflict between LPDs and the public, sheep producers should consider operating with both a day and a night herder, supported by herding dogs, in order to have someone with the sheep and with the LPDs at all times.

### **Herder Education Requirements**

- ✓ Herders will have reasonable access to a phone or radio to contact the livestock owner regarding LPD management issues.
- ✓ Herders will be provided with LPD brochures and information cards that list the livestock owner's name and contact information that can be distributed to the general public and others who may come into contact with the sheep and LPDs. Herders should know where the rabies vaccination certificates are located and should be prepared to share those with appropriate governmental officials/law enforcement if requested.
- ✓ Herders will contact livestock owner as soon as possible to notify owner if a LPD is missing so the LPD can be located and returned to the sheep or removed from the allotment.
- ✓ Herders on federal lands must have voice control over LPDs and herding dogs.
- ✓ Herders will actively manage LPDs and will not allow LPDs to roam or to chase or excessively bark at vehicles, hikers, bikers or wildlife which does not pose a threat to the sheep.
- ✓ Herders will post LPD information signs near the sheep.

### **Agency Cooperation Requirements**

- ✓ LPD owners will contact appropriate agencies (animal control, sheriff's office, wildlife, etc) and explain the use of LPDs in their area. Owners should advise agencies to contact the LPD owner immediately if an LPD is found or there is a conflict with neighbors, recreationalists or wildlife. LPD owners should make every effort to educate agencies about LPD's and to rectify conflict situations as soon as they arise.

### **Agency Cooperation (BMPs)**

- ✓ Sheep producers need to work closely with BLM and Forest Service staff (and if necessary, wildlife agencies) to avoid potential conflicts that could involve LPDs.
- ✓ Permittees and agencies should cooperate in ensuring that trailheads are posted with appropriate LPD information signs when flocks are in the vicinity and contact is likely.

- ✓ Permittees and agencies should cooperate in developing routing schedules designed to ensure that flocks and associated LPDs are no closer than ¼ mile to any trailhead, significant use trail, developed or significant use dispersed recreational site, etc., during weekends, holidays or other high potential recreational use periods as specified by the agencies.
- ✓ Permittees and agencies should cooperate to ensure that potential overlap of permitted activities such as permitted sheep grazing and recreational events or work project activities is managed to reduce the potential for conflict between the dogs and the other users and should make timely and appropriate information available to all parties to allow for proactive planning to minimize risk of conflict.
- ✓ Permittees and agencies should consider the use of temporary closure orders to limit recreational use in areas of significant potential conflict.
- ✓ Agencies need to recognize that bicycles and riders bring with them a heightened possibility of conflict. Bicycles tend to be quiet, move at good speed and carry a large profile, all factors that cause instinctive protective reaction and action by LPDs.
- ✓ Sheep producers should work closely with APHIS Wildlife Services and other entities involved in predator control activities to plan and carryout appropriate levels of predator management in order to assure that wildlife causing, or having potential to cause, damage are removed as expeditiously as possible in order to lessen stress on LPDs and potentially reduce the number of LPDs required in a specific area.

### **Public Relations Management (BMPs)**

- ✓ LPD owners will strive to maintain positive working relationships with agencies, law enforcement, neighbors and the general public when managing LPDs.

### **Certification Statement**

The undersigned individual agrees to make every effort to comply with the requirements and recommended best management practices as outlined in the ASI Livestock Protection & Herding Dog Certification program. When as undesirable behavior or situation arises, the LPD owner agrees to immediately address/correct the problem in order to adhere to the requirements and best management practices of the ASI Livestock Protection & Herding Dog Certification program. The LPD owner acknowledges that failure to comply with the program requirements will result in the immediate cancelation of the ASI program certification and ASI supplemental insurance policy. ASI reserves the right to cancel anyone's certification due to lack of effort or intent to adhere to the best management practices. If a certification is canceled, the LPD owner must wait for one year before attempting to re-certify. The certification program adheres to a "3 strike" policy. If a LPD owner is de-certified 3 times, they will not be allowed to re-certify in the future.

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Signature

Date