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Sheep production and stray dogs attacks in Beira Interior – Portugal

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Livestock production in extensive and semi extensive systems (mainly with sheep) is faced with a high level of attacks/predation done by stray dogs, wolves or other carnivores. In the region, sheep predation by stray dogs is recognised; foxes and Egyptian mongooses also attack lambs. The incidence of attacks on livestock animals was evaluated in Beira Interior, Portugal, based on inquiries (n=156) with the last actualisation in 2007. Results show that: -In 63% of the inquired farms, with 78% of the inquired area and 76% of the total livestock, at least one attack had been observed or attributed to the responsibility of stray dogs; -The average area and flock in farms with attacks are higher than in farms without attacks; -Incidence of dead and injured sheep: 3/inquire/year and 4,8/farm with attack/year. The legal mechanisms of dogs capture aren't efficient. As a reaction, farmers use the shooting as a control method. Other methods aren't referred, but it is possible to verify the presence of dead Livestock Guardian Dogs by poison and sliding knots. These defence methods acts not only in dogs, but as well in wild carnivore species and scavengers, limiting or blocking the hypothesis of territorial reoccupation by wolf in a region considered as a natural expansion area. EU project LIFE-COEX 04NAT/IT/000144.