



### ***A Brief History of Sheep Grazing***

Spanish explorers brought sheep to the Colorado Plateau in the 1500's, and sheep grazing in Colorado has been a significant historic land use since the 1800's. Sheep grazing has been in existence prior to the establishment of the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and the Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Many things have changed over the years such as the restrictions on the livestock owner's ability to control predators that harass and kill sheep, and increased recreational use of areas historically used for livestock grazing.

The USFS and BLM are mandated by Congress to manage federal lands for multiple-use. Multiple-use includes livestock grazing, timber harvest, mining, ATV use, and other recreational uses such as mountain biking, hiking, and camping. Sometimes these multiple-uses conflict with each other. This brochure is published to help foster a better understanding of the use of livestock protection dogs and sheep grazing, and to minimize potential conflicts.

### ***Why Do We Use Livestock Protection Dogs?***

If unprotected, sheep can be killed by a variety of predators including coyotes, bears, lions, and domestic dogs. Over the years, increased state and federal regulations have significantly reduced livestock owners' ability to protect their sheep from predator attacks. With the loss of many traditional management options, livestock protection dogs have become an extremely important means to reduce predator attacks on sheep.



Livestock protection dogs live with the sheep and patrol the perimeters of the sheep grazing area to ward off predators. Livestock protection dogs are used extensively throughout Europe and areas in Asia, as well as coast-to-coast across America. Livestock protection dogs have been bred for centuries to bond with the sheep and protect flocks from predator attacks. Without livestock protection dogs guarding sheep, thousands of sheep and lambs would be killed by predators every year.

### ***Livestock Protection Dogs & Domestic Dogs***

Livestock protection dogs are trained working dogs. Their job is to protect the sheep. A loose dog running up to a band of sheep to investigate is a perceived predator to a livestock protection dog and may be attacked. Keep your dog on a leash and under your control at all times. Livestock protection dogs are there to protect the sheep, and if you do not appear to be a threat, most of the time, they will just watch you pass by.

While it may be acceptable in a city park or other setting for your dog to get acquainted with strange dogs; it is not acceptable near a band of sheep. Livestock protection dogs are guarding the sheep and your dog is considered a threat to the sheep. Keep your dog on a leash and quietly and calmly leave the area to avoid confrontation. If your dog is loose and encounters a livestock protection dog, your dog's safety is in jeopardy. Additionally, if your dog kills or injures any sheep or lambs you are financially responsible for the loss.

### ***Livestock Protection Dogs & Mountain Bikers***

Mountain bikers can inadvertently pose a threat for livestock protection dogs. Generally, if you are approaching on foot, horseback, or on an ATV a livestock protection dog will see and/or hear you approach and have time to recognize the new "intruder." However, mountain bikes are fast, relatively quiet, and present a unknown profile to the livestock protection dog. A

conflict situation may arise if a mountain biker rapidly approaches a flock of sheep and startles the livestock protection dog.

The following are actions to take to minimize potential conflicts if you are near a band of sheep.

### **DO.....**

- ✓ **Keep your dog on a leash and never allow your dog to harass the sheep**
- ✓ Watch for livestock protection dogs near sheep (usually large white or tan dogs)
- ✓ Remain calm if a livestock protection dog approaches
- ✓ Stop and get off of your bike, put your bike between you and the dog
- ✓ Tell the dog to “go back to the sheep”
- ✓ Walk your bike until well past the sheep
- ✓ Keep your distance from the sheep
- ✓ Choose the least disruptive route around the sheep
- ✓ If the sheep are trailing, wait for them to pass

### **DO NOT....**

- ✓ **Chase or harass the sheep or dogs**
- ✓ Try to outrun the dogs
- ✓ Throw things at the dogs
- ✓ Make quick movements
- ✓ Feed the dogs
- ✓ Take a dog with you
- ✓ Attempt to befriend or pet the dog

### ***Don't Feed or Pet the Dogs!***

Livestock protection dogs are not pets; they are specially trained working dogs with an important job to do. Feeding or petting the dogs will distract them from their job of protecting the sheep and encourage them to approach and follow other recreationalists they encounter. *Enjoy the rare opportunity to view a unique part of Colorado's ranching heritage when you encounter sheep grazing, but do not pet or feed the dogs!*

### ***Vehicles & Sheep***

If you are driving a vehicle and sheep are being trailed on the road, please be patient. Stay in your vehicle and do not wave or dangle your arms outside the vehicle. If you have a dog in your vehicle, make sure to keep him calm and quiet. Drive forward very slowly, but do not bump sheep out of the way with your vehicle.



## ***Colorado Sheep Grazing & Livestock Protection Dogs***



### ***Colorado Wool Growers Association Colorado Sheep & Wool Authority***

*PO Box 292*

*Delta, CO 81416 - 0292*

*(970)874 - 1433 • (970)874 - 4170 fax*

*www.coloradosheep.org*

*cwgawool@aol.com*