Large Carnivore Damage Prevention and Conservation: Livestock Guarding Dogs in Finland and Estonia

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BACKGROUND

- In recent decades the populations of wolves (*Canis lupus*), bears (*Ursus arctos*) and other large carnivores have increased in Finland and in Estonia and expanded towards more inhabited areas.

CONFLICT

- The amount of damage to pasturing livestock and hunting dogs is increasing as well as negative attitudes towards predators.
- Large carnivores are often perceived as a threat for human safety.
- Large carnivores are protected by several international agreements and EU regulations.
Domestic animals killed by wolves in Estonia 2004-2008 (P. Männil, M. Kübarsepp 2008)

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COMPENSATIONS

- The compensation systems differ between countries
- Payments species-based or damage-based
- In Finland 4,25 million € estimated for compensations in 2009
- In Estonia 76 700 € applied in 2009
- What causes the 55 times difference?
- The compensation programs by themselves are not a solution to human-large carnivore conflict and they should be used with big caution to avoid creating addiction instead of motivation
NON-LETHAL PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Shepherds
- Wolf-phone service
- Anti-predator fences
- Protection vests
- Electrical devices
- Livestock Guarding Dogs

WHAT IS A LIVESTOCK GUARDING DOG?

- LGD, Livestock Guarding Dog, Livestock Protection Dog
- Has been used in Asia and Europe for thousands of years
WHAT IS A LIVESTOCK GUARDING DOG?

- Protects domestic animals independently without human command even if often together with shepherds.

- LGD is not a hearing dog, differs significantly in behaviour.
WHAT IS A LIVESTOCK GUARDING DOG?

- In countries of origin usually work in dog packs

WHAT IS A LIVESTOCK GUARDING DOG?

- Protects independently the domestic animals to whom has been bonded in a very early age
WHAT IS A LIVESTOCK GUARDING DOG?

- Nowadays also used in Argentina, Australia, Canada, Namibia, USA...

FOUR QUALITIES EXPECTED FROM A LGD

- Attentive
- Trustworthy
- Protective
- Human tolerant
PROBLEM

- There is no LGD tradition in Nordic and Baltic countries
- Farmers have started to acquire Livestock Guarding Dogs on their own initiative
- In Finland information about fifty and in Estonia about two farms using LGDs

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Source: Kennelliiton KoiraNet Jakoystietojärjestelmä 3.2.2009
RESULTS

- 50 farms
- 12 different LGD breeds
RESULTS

- No damages during LGDs used
- Various kinds of domestic animals were guarded by LGDs

RESULTS

- Successful bonding with the stock, the LGD is going to protect, is needed for successful guarding
- LGD pups bonded properly in an early age had less disadvantages
OTHER BENEFITS

- Termination of elk (Alces alces) damages to pasture fences
- Termination of white-tailed deer (Odocoileus virginianus) damages to horticultural plants
- Worth to use against wild boar (Sus scrofa) predation on crops in Estonia

OTHER BENEFITS

- Increasing personal feelings of security
- Children could be permitted to be outdoors
OTHER BENEFITS

- Hunting and pet dogs were safe at farmyards
- Cost-efficient, all costs can be reduced in taxation

OTHER BENEFITS

- The need for additional fencing to keep the LGDs filling their purpose seemed not to be essential if LGDs had been bonded properly
OTHER BENEFITS

- LGDs were interlinked with improved quality of life in rural areas and development of rural tourism
- Does the guarding job improve the health and welfare of LGDs?

PROBLEMS

- How to raise the knowledge about using livestock guarding dogs for work among dog-breeders and farmers?
- There is a need for educational and advising projects based on research to fulfill the lack of knowledge
DISADVANTAGES

- Minor difficulties in inter-animal relationships: playing, chasing and wandering of LGDs outside pasture areas

CONCLUSION

- LGDs have been successful this far in Finland and Estonia: 0 CASUALTIES
- Nordic-Baltic cooperation needed in research to develop preventive measures
- Compensation sums could be reduced by supporting effective preventive measures
THANK YOU!

WE KEEP AN EYE ON YOU!