

ADDENDUM 2

PREDATION MANAGEMENT

A basic principle is that it is always the responsibility of the farmer to safe keep his/her stock from predators, diseases and any other situation that may cause harm.

Predators play an important role in controlling animal numbers and maintaining balance in ecosystems. They remove old and sick animals whereas some are excellent scavengers by devouring carcasses which otherwise could have posed a thread of disease. Predators are territorial and the social behaviour of each species play an important role in the demarcation of their territories. The injudicious removal of predators from a system results in a vacuum that may result in a continuous inflow of foreign animals into the area. Such large numbers of foreign animals in a new habitat, desperately in need to control their own territories, will inevitably feed on easy prey such as smallstock.

Attempts to randomly kill predators in the protection of livestock do not provide a long-term solution. A balanced approach to improve the status and composition of their normal prey, a sound knowledge of the predator population on farms (especially of the dominant territorial animals), protection of the livestock in partnership with neighbouring farms and participating in a co-ordinated predator control initiative, in time will result in less stock losses.

It is important to control predators with a co-ordinated approach by using a combination of best practices (lethal as well as non-lethal methods). Hunters must be cautious not to kill a predator unless they have strong evidence that they are dealing with the real culprit.

IMPLEMENTATION METHODS TO CONTROL PROBLEM CAUSING PREDATORS

Hunters and stock owners who manage predators should be accredited by a conservation authority (usually a nature conservation body). Accreditation is obtained through experience and attending specific accredited courses. Farmers should consider the following:

- Preferably use non-lethal methods such as natural shepherds (dogs, donkeys, Alpacas), pens, predator proof fences and livestock protection collars.
- The control measures must be legal (e.g. non-poisonous).
- Ensure that the control method for the target predator is used correctly.
- All information regarding the relevant control methods that will be implemented should be well-researched before implementation. Training of handlers are crucial .
- Target only the culprits, not the species in general.
- Always collect and keep statistics of both livestock losses and predators killed. Also record the predator's age, sex and stomach contents.
- Liaise and exchange data with the conservation authority that coordinates predator management.

CRITERIA TO MEASURE CONTROL METHODS

- Control methods must be cost effective and correlated with livestock losses.
- Must be effective by using only qualified hunters.
- Must be quick and humane to limit suffering.
- Must be selective and targeting only the damage causing predators.
- Must have the minimum effect on the species and the environment.

Successful management of predators require the development of a natural habitat plan where the producer can observe the different predators, their totals as well as their behaviour.

A typical integrated plan consists of the following:

- A map, indicating water holes, lairs and territory of predators.
- Information on the mating season and offspring of the flock or herd.
- Notes on numbers, cost of methods, control management statistics, information on species, sex, age and stomach contents of killed predators.
- Contact details of Nature Conservation officials involved with control and management of predators.
- The integrated management plan emphasizes non-lethal methods such as:
 - **Clock- and smell collars:** These collars are cheap, low maintenance, easy to use and attainable. It was developed by farmers for local conditions. If used too frequently, it may give away the locality of the stock.
 - **Ranger (“veldwagter”) collars:** This technology consists of a censor that picks up movement. It will assist the farmer to act on a possible stock theft or predator attack. The disadvantage is that these collars only function in a cell phone area.
 - **Fences :** This is the only method which protects 365 days of the year. It is a long term and durable solution in smaller areas and farms. However, some predators can dig holes under the fences, therefore the basis of the fence should be well-established in the soil. Electrification of fences may be considered but it is expensive.
 - **Deterrents :** This may include lights or alarms that will unnerve the predator.

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- **Guardian animals:** There is a new interest in more effective, traditional ways such as with guardian animals e.g. Anatolian dogs, Alpacas and donkeys. Anatolian dogs are only effective when selected and trained correctly. The dogs when still puppies should be put in the camp or paddock to bond with the flock. Donkeys are also effective watchdogs. A single donkey, especially a mare, will adopt the flock as her own and therefore guard them. Alpacas are usually effective due to their curious and fearless behaviour.
- **King collars:** This is a wide, adjustable PVC collar that is fitted around the neck of each animal in the herd. It is difficult, if not impossible for a predator to bite the animal in the neck.
- **Dead stop collars:** This is a more stout collar than the King collar which will guard the flock against caracal attacks. However, both the dead stop and King collar does not prevent the prey to be attacked from behind.

It is important that farmers and workers receive the necessary training on predators, the resources available to control their numbers and in managing the abovementioned methods efficiently.

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