

Tuesday 2nd September 2025

Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendments) Bill 2025

The Bill in Brief¹:

- The Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendments) Bill 2025 is a Government-backed Private Members Bill, sponsored by Aphra Brandreth MP (Conservative) in the House of Commons and by Baroness Coffey in the House of Lords, to amend the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953.
- The Bill received its first reading in the House of Lords on 7th July 2025 and is scheduled for second reading on Friday 5th September 2025.
- Livestock worrying was a component of the withdrawn Kept Animals Bill and was reintroduced by the Conservative Government as the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Bill 2023-24, which fell during dissolution. The current wording of the bill is identical to this previous iteration, including amendments made during Committee Stage in the House of Commons.
- Key amendments include:
 - provisions to extend the definition of livestock to include llamas and alpacas, and extend the locations where worrying can occur to include paths and roads,
 - increases in police powers to seize, detain and gather evidence (DNA sample and impressions) from suspect dogs or dogs they believe could attack or worry livestock again if not detained,
 - increase penalty for offences, including owners paying expenses associated with seizing and detaining their dog, and
 - update terminology so 'attacking livestock' is dealt with separately from 'worrying livestock'.
- The bill extends to England and Wales and will come into force three months after the Act is passed.

Current Legislation:

- **The Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953** is the main legislation covering livestock attacks by dogs in England and Wales.
 - The bill defines agricultural land, and animal species classified as livestock (*cattle, sheep, goats, swine, horses and poultry*) as well as a definition of livestock worrying to include attacking, chasing or being at large in a field containing livestock.
- **The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991** makes it an offence for a dog to be dangerously out of control anywhere, including both public and private places.
- **The Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2021** (which only applies to Scotland) increases fines for owners up to level 5 on the standard scale (£5,000) and/or a 6-month maximum prison sentence². It also increases police powers to seize and detain dogs and extends the definition of 'livestock' to include camelids, deer and a range of bird species.

Background to the Bill:

- The number of livestock kept in the UK has nearly doubled since the 1953 Act passed, as well as an increase in dog ownership and more visits to the countryside with dogs. Each year, there are an estimated 34,000 incidents of livestock worrying in England and Wales³.
- Livestock worrying causes serious distress and physical harm to livestock and in worse cases can result in death of the animal, or possibly its unborn offspring. This distress extends to the keepers of the animals with potentially devastating financial costs and personal distress.
 - The National Sheep Association (NSA) predicts that the average cost of livestock worrying to farmers each year is £1,570 with the majority of farmers receiving little to no compensation⁴.

¹ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-04/0045/230045.pdf>

² <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/bills/s5-bills/dogs-protection-of-livestock-amendment-scotland-bill/introduced/policy-memorandum-dogs-protection-of-livestock-amendment-scotland-bill.pdf>

³ DEFRA . Livestock Worrying Reforms -Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Bill Impact Assessment . 2024 Sep.

⁴ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9229/CBP-9229.pdf>

- Furthermore, in the most recent NSA survey, 87% of respondents reported at least one sheep worrying incident in the last 12 months, up from 70% in 2023⁵.
- A 2018 report by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) found that most worrying incidents occur where the dog owner or walker was not present i.e., the dog has escaped from its home.
- The current legislation is inadequate for several reasons: it fails to ensure the ability to collect evidence necessary for prosecution, does not cover the most common livestock species in England and Wales, overlooks locations where livestock are most vulnerable to attacks and lacks provisions for dogs that are likely to reoffend.

Highlights of the Bill:

- Inclusion of paths and roads:
1a) bring incidents on roads and paths within the scope of the offence in section 1 of that Act;
 - Many livestock are moved between fields, or from fields to milking parlours along paths and roads. During these movements the animals may be more vulnerable to dog attacks. Since the highway code increased horse access and safety on paths and roads in January 2022, there has been a spike in dog attacks to horses.
 - Between the start of 2022 and the end of 2023, 726 dog related incidents were reported to the British Horse Society (BHS). Of these, 671 incidents occurred where horses were exercising, including common land, and resulted in a total of 78 horse fatalities⁶.
 - These figures are likely to be an underestimate as not all dog-related incidents regarding horses will be reported to the BHS.
 - The amendment **does not** include livestock which **stray** onto roads and paths from the place they are normally kept, **unless** the person responsible for the dog in question causes the dog to purposefully attack the livestock¹.
- Livestock covered:
1b) bring camelids within the definition of 'livestock' that applies for the purpose of the offence
 - As the prevalence of camelid livestock farming in the UK is increasing, so are the dog attacks on these animals and therefore the need for them to be protected under legislation.
- Improved police powers:
 - Powers of entry:
 - Increased powers to search premises (other than the land on which the offence was committed) to identify, seize and detain, and/or take samples from the animal of which they have reasonable grounds to believe is responsible for the offence.
 - Police are able to collect evidence i.e., bloody collar/towels⁷ which may help lead to a prosecution.
 - Seizure powers:
 - Increased powers for police to seize and detain a suspect dog until the owner has claimed the dog and paid all expenses incurred from its detainment⁵.
 - The previous legislation prevents police seizing suspect dogs for prolonged periods of time when it is common for a dog who has alleged to have worried livestock to commit further attacks in the interim between their owner awaiting trial and being sentenced. Therefore, this measure reduces the ability of repeat offending dogs who are likely to pose an ongoing risk to livestock in this period.

⁵ National Sheep Association. 'Survey Results', 2025

⁶ British Horse Society briefing

⁷ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-04/0045/230045.pdf>

- If the owner of the dog doesn't claim the animal and/or pay the associated expenses, then after 7 days from the day after the dog was seized, the dog can be disposed of¹.
 - Sample collection:
 - Currently, most cases of livestock worrying don't end up with a prosecution due to a lack of evidence³.
 - The new legislation allows for samples or impressions to be taken from livestock and dogs, which may provide evidence for an offence to have been committed under the Act.
 - Samples can be taken by police, unless samples are classified as veterinary surgery (under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966) then they must be acquired by a veterinary surgeon.
 - The ability of police officers to take samples is necessary to protect an already overstretched and under-staffed veterinary profession.
 - Furthermore, it allows for animals to be seized and detained for the purpose of sample collection.
 - Includes a definition of 'sample' - *means any material that has come from the body of an animal and consists of, or includes, animal cells;*
- Separation of livestock worrying and livestock attacking

1f) update the terminology used in that Act so that attacking livestock is dealt with separately from worrying livestock.

 - This is necessary to recognise the violent and distressing nature of livestock worrying which can still have catastrophic consequences for the animal and the owner⁵.
- Fines:
 - The bill increases the maximum penalty from £1,000 to an unlimited fine (as decided during House of Commons Report Stage 2024) to provide an additional deterrent to help reduce the risk of livestock worrying, as well as any payment of costs of 'reasonable expense incurred' from the seizure and detention of the animal.

Concerns

- Correct dog identification
 - There is possible limited capacity for the objective and reliable identification of dogs seized under the Act, as the details required to be kept by the chief officer of police for each police area **does not** include a microchip identification number, but **does** include the following:
 - (a) a brief description of the dog;*
 - (b) the date of seizure of the dog;*
 - (c) if the dog is disposed of under subsection (3), how.*
 - If the microchip number was recorded, it would make it easier to track repeat-offending animals and improve the traceability to owners when dogs are seized after an unaccompanied offence.
- The RSPCA advocate for further expansion of the livestock definition to include other species, such as farmed deer enclosed game birds, ostriches and buffalo, and to other locations, such as woodland grazing, more in line with measures in the updated Scottish legislation⁸.
- There may be repercussions for police resources, for example funding DNA testing of dogs as well as keeping detained animals. The NPCC estimate it can cost up to £1000/month to keep dogs in police kennels⁹.

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⁸ RSPCA briefing, Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Bill, 2025 parliamentary briefing

⁹ NPCC. Police seize more than 4500 XL Bully dogs since ban. National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). 2025. Available from: <https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/police-seize-more-than-4500-xl-bully-dogs-since-ban?utm>