Use of Dogs in the Mediation of Conservation Conflicts

Kurt VerCauteren and Michael Lavelle
USDA APHIS Wildlife Services, National Wildlife Research Center, Fort Collins, Colorado
Jean-Marc Landry
Institute for the Promotion and Research on Guarding Animals, Martigny, Switzerland
Laurie Marker
Cheetah Conservation Fund, Otjiwarongo, Namibia
Thomas M. Gehring
Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, Michigan

ABSTRACT: Conflicts between wildlife and humans are of global importance and are increasing. These conflicts may negatively impact wildlife, humans, and other resources, primarily livestock. Human safety and economic well-being can be adversely impacted by depredation of livestock and perpetuation of wildlife-borne diseases in agricultural systems. Conversely, management approaches to mitigate these conflicts may employ primarily lethal control methods that can negatively impact wildlife populations of conservation importance. Dogs, principally livestock protection breeds, have been used for centuries in some cultures to protect livestock from predators. Dogs have also been used for a variety of other conservation-specific practices. Here we provide an overview of a chapter we developed on this topic for a book entitled Free-ranging Dogs and Wildlife Conservation, just released by Oxford University Press (2013). We will review past and current use of dogs for mediating wildlife-human conflict and highlight future areas of research that are needed to more effectively use dogs for mediating conservation conflicts.

KEY WORDS: Canis familiaris, cattle, damage, guardian, livestock protection dog, predation, sheep, wildlife, wolf

Published at Univ. of Calif., Davis. 2014. Pp. 411-412.
jubatus) has provided an alternative to lethal means for addressing the problem while concurrently enabling cheetahs, livestock, and herders to coexist on the landscape (Marker et al. 2005). Researchers have found herding dog breeds such as border collies effective in hazing nuisance wildlife species such as waterfowl from parks and elk (Cervus canadensis) from urban areas (Castelli and Sleggs 2000, Kloppers et al. 2005, Walter et al. 2010). Aggressive hunting breeds such as the Karedian bear dog are being successfully incorporated into routine wildlife management to alleviate conflicts between bears and humans, thus minimizing the need for lethal strategies (Beckmann et al. 2004).

Although dogs demonstrate unparalleled potential in addressing a variety of wildlife damage issues, their use does have its challenges. For example, overlap among livestock grazing areas and recreational interests have been a source of contention, especially when communication and education amongst users is lacking. Fortunately, private and governmental entities are working to educate people on both sides of the issue to alleviate this situation. Behavioral issues such as overt aggression, wandering, and inattention to livestock can put a dog, livestock, and humans at risk and should be remedied as soon as realized. Retraining and repurposing dogs is a positive alternative to culling dogs not functioning as expected. Though there have been thousands of years of selective breeding LPDs to meet the needs of protecting livestock, each LPD is an individual, varied and versatile, and their users and trainers must remain versatile as well as innovative. Understanding the behavior of LPDs as well as that of adversaries they are guarding against requires continued research and adaptation. Continued growth in the use of LPDs will require further training of LPD users and education of the public at large.

For a more detailed discussion of this subject and similar dog-related topics, please refer to Gompper (2013) and VerCauteren et al. (2013).

**LITERATURE CITED**


