

The Deadly Reality of Spring: Protecting Dogs and Livestock

Idaho Animal Rescue Network | May 16, 2025



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Spring in Idaho: When Puppy Season Collides with Gunshot Season

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In the past week alone, we've seen two devastating incidents involving dogs and livestock. In Latah County, a couple of dogs were shot and killed while reportedly attempting to attack a cow and a small dog. Just days later, two dogs in the Lewiston Orchards killed young 4-H pigs. Those dogs and their owner have been identified per the Lewiston Tribune.

Unfortunately, these situations are not isolated. Every spring and summer, we see a spike in calls and cases involving dogs with gunshot wounds, many of them fatal. A large portion of these cases is directly tied to interactions with livestock.

The interaction between dogs and livestock highlights the importance of responsible pet ownership in farm environments in Idaho.

Idaho's "Dog at Large" and livestock protection laws are clear: livestock owners are legally permitted to protect their animals from dogs that are attacking, wounding, or harassing them. According to Idaho Code § 25-2806, any person who finds a dog not on its owner's property and in the act of worrying, wounding, or killing livestock or poultry may kill the dog at that time without liability for damages.

Additionally, the owner of a dog that kills, wounds, or harasses livestock is liable for damages and costs incurred by the livestock owner. This statute underscores the importance of responsible pet ownership, especially in rural areas where livestock are present.

It's important to note that while state law provides this allowance, local ordinances may have additional restrictions, such as prohibitions on discharging firearms within certain areas. Therefore, it's advisable to consult local laws and regulations before taking action.

Why Does This Happen Now?

As the weather warms up, people and their pets spend more time outside. Fences get tested. Gates are accidentally left open. Dogs that may not typically roam take off chasing smells, wildlife, or simply exploring new territory. Unfortunately, in farm country, even a curious dog can pose a perceived threat to livestock.

Spring also means young livestock, such as calves, foals, piglets, and lambs. These animals are more vulnerable, and their owners are especially alert. The presence of roaming dogs can quickly escalate into tragedy.

What You Can Do

While these cases are heartbreaking, they are also preventable. Here are a few things you can do to protect your pets:

Secure your yard: Check fences and gates regularly. Make sure your dog can't dig under or jump over them.

Don't let your dog roam: Even if your dog is friendly, livestock owners won't take the risk, and legally, they don't have to.

Use a leash: When walking near farmland or rural areas, keep your dog leashed at all times.

Report stray or loose dogs: If you see dogs roaming in areas with livestock, report them to local animal control or authorities.

A Call for Responsibility

We understand the love people have for their pets, but that love comes with responsibility.

As rescuers, we've seen far too many dogs injured, killed, or rehomed because someone didn't take the time to secure their property or understand the risks.

We don't want to see more dogs die this season.

Please, do your part. Keep your dogs safe, secure, and under your supervision. Together, we can prevent needless tragedies on both sides of the fence.

Source & Contact

Current story:

<https://idahorescue.com/2025/05/16/the-deadly-reality-of-spring-protecting-dogs-and-livestock-in-rural-idaho/>

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