



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Washington, D.C. 20240
<http://www.blm.gov>



In Reply Refer To:
4100 (220)

February 24, 2010

Mr. Glen Fisher
President
American Sheep Industry Association
9785 Maroon Circle
Suite 360
Englewood, Colorado 80112-2692

Dear Mr. Fisher:

This letter is in response to your letter dated December 18, 2009, regarding livestock protection dogs. Several states forwarded your letter to the Washington Office so that you might receive one Bureau of Land Management (BLM) coordinated response. Thank you for bringing this to our attention and I want to commend the American Sheep Industry (ASI) for their commitment to proactively address this issue. We appreciate your thorough review of the issues and development of suggestions to address those issues.

The BLM agrees that most, if not all incidents, can be avoided through proactive management by all parties involved, including Federal agencies, permittees, and the public. Efforts have been initiated in several states, including Idaho, California, and Colorado, to reduce conflicts between livestock operations and outdoor recreationists on public land. For example, BLM Idaho's Shoshone Field Office and the Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission initiated the "Care and Share" program to prevent and reduce such conflicts. The program includes posting information at trailheads and using portable signs that can be moved along the trail as the geographical position of the sheep change.

The BLM plans to issue guidance to BLM field offices that reinforces continued coordination between the range and recreation programs and promotes proactive programs such as livestock protection dog training, the Care/Share program, web links, and/or portable signs. The BLM will provide direction to BLM field offices to:

- Reinforce continued coordination and identify a process for notification of permitted or planned events that will occur on or near a sheep grazing allotment. Under current BLM policy, applicants applying for a Special Recreation Permit (Special Recreation Application and Permit, BLM Form 2930-1) are required to inform other pertinent private landowners and/or public agencies of the proposed event. The BLM field office will then contact other authorized users regarding the event.

- Promote proactive programs such as the Care/Share program, portable signs, and outreach, such as information booths at county fairs.
- Make maps available to the public that show locations of active sheep grazing allotments.
- Develop information regarding actions that can be used to minimize conflicts when there is a high potential for interaction between livestock protection dogs (LPD) and other public land users. An example includes developing portable signs that livestock permittees can move along the trail as the geographical positions of the sheep change.
- Promote public outreach, such as posting signs at trailheads.
- Work with grazing permittees to encourage the use of dogs that meet LPD standards, particularly training all LPDs used on public land not to show aggressive behavior toward people and restrained dogs, training all LPDs to respond to voice commands, and ensuring that herders are present to actively manage LPDs.

We also encourage grazing permittees/lessees to work directly with local field offices on solutions to minimize conflicts and promote proactive programs.

Recently, the BLM participated in the National ASI Meeting in Nashville and supports the draft Livestock Protection Dog certification program. The certification program would be a significant tool as part of a long-term solution and we applaud your efforts.

As the BLM develops guidance, we will work with ASI and our contact, Dustin Bryant. We will also coordinate with the U.S. Forest Service to provide as much consistency as possible.

Should you have any questions, please contact Kimberly Hackett at 202-912-7216.

Sincerely,



Edwin L. Roberson
Assistant Director
Renewable Resources and Planning