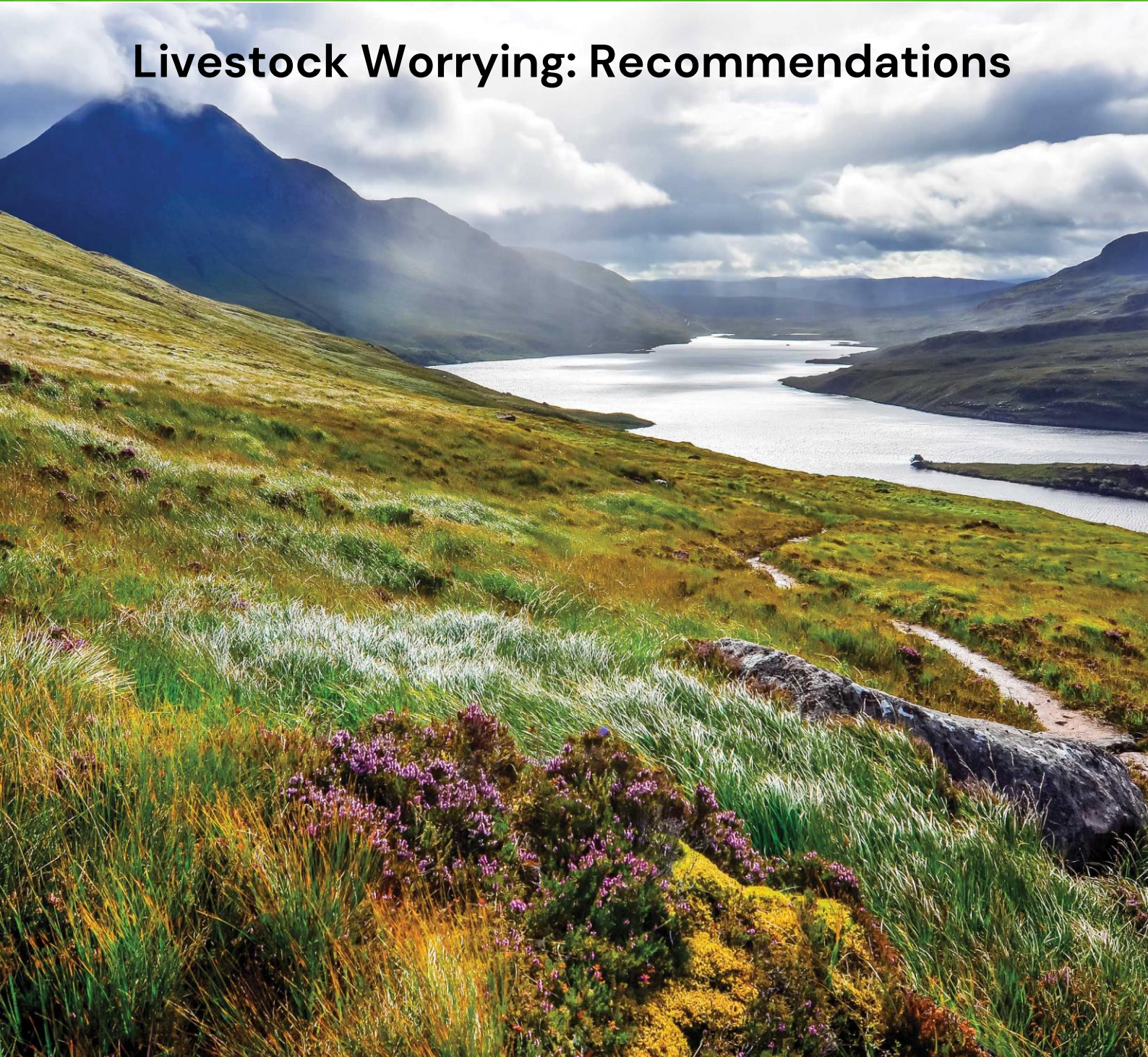




# **Livestock Worrying: Recommendations**



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## Introduction

This policy brief has been co-produced by participants of a livestock worrying workshop, which was held in Cupar, Fife in Spring 2023. Participants included: access officers, countryside rangers, dog training experts, farmers / land managers and social science academics. Recommendations from the workshop participants are included in this policy briefing.

The authors would like to thank workshop participants for their input.

## Background information

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) provides guidance on the responsibilities of access users and on managers of the land in relation to the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003<sup>1</sup>. The Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2021<sup>2</sup> came into force on 5 November 2021 to tackle the issue of out-of-control dogs attacking and worrying livestock. Despite the 2021 Act, incidents of livestock worrying, and dog attacks are regularly reported in Scotland<sup>3,4</sup>.

## Key recommendations

- SOAC should be reviewed to reduce ambiguity and to improve clarity. As a priority, the wording 'close control' should be changed to 'keep dogs on a short lead'.
- Use of the phrase 'right to roam' should be strongly discouraged and replaced by the phrase 'right to responsible access'.



<sup>1</sup> [Land Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2003 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/32/contents)

<sup>2</sup> [Dogs \(Protection of Livestock\) \(Amendment\) \(Scotland\) Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/12/contents)

<sup>3</sup> [Livestock worrying is significant problem for farmers in Borders | The Scottish Farmer](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Man, 73, charged after lambs killed in Moray dog incident – BBC News](#)



## 1. Recommendations for changes to legislation

- 1.1. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) and case law should be reviewed.
  - 1.1.1. It is hoped this review will resolve ambiguity in some of the wording, which is believed to underpin – in part – current misinterpretations or disregard of the codes. For example, misinterpretations around the term ‘close control’, suggests changes in wording may lead to improved dog owner practices.
  - 1.1.2. It was also noted that levels of resource availability to support the code have declined since the 2003 Act. It is hoped that a revised code will highlight resources required for implementation, monitoring, promotion and policing.  
*Please note that this is in addition to the ongoing review undertaken by NatureScot<sup>5</sup>.*
- 1.2. Explore the reintroduction of dog licensing. Separate licenses could be available for working dogs and pets.
- 1.3. Guidance for access to farmland with livestock should more closely align with land with crops<sup>6</sup> and golf course access<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> [Keeping it under review | Scottish Outdoor Access Code \(outdooraccess-scotland.scot\)](https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/)

<sup>6</sup> [Key points when visiting the outdoors | Scottish Outdoor Access Code \(outdooraccess-scotland.scot\)](https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/)

<sup>7</sup> [Planning for public access on golf courses – A quick guide to access rights and responsibilities.pdf \(outdooraccess-scotland.scot\)](https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/)

## 2. Recommendations for fines & policing

- 2.1. A higher level of fines should be imposed for dog related offences and the use of anti-social behaviour orders and community service considered for dog owners.
- 2.2. The public should be encouraged / empowered to report incidents as it is impossible for police and livestock farmers to be on site for every incident, as in the 'Dogs and Rural Crime' guidance<sup>8</sup>.

## 3. Recommendations for understanding rights of access

The "Right to Roam" phrase is not in the Land Reform Act but is in common parlance. It is felt to be misleading and that use of the phrase should be discouraged, whilst use of the term "Right to Responsible Access" should be encouraged.

## 4. Recommendations for education and awareness raising

- 4.1. Increased education and awareness are required. For example, the public should be made aware that proximity of dogs to livestock should be avoided where possible; if unavoidable, distance should be maximised, pace and noise minimised, and a short lead required. Materials for use in puppy training classes, for new dog owners and for the school curriculum should be developed.
- 4.2. There should be an *Easy Read* version of the SOAC, which should include less text and more images to increase overall engagement and comprehension.

Please contact Dr Lesley Jessiman ([lesley.jessiman@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:lesley.jessiman@sruc.ac.uk)) or Dr Kate Lamont ([kate.lamont@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:kate.lamont@sruc.ac.uk)) for further information.

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[https://ichef.bbci.co.uk/news/976/cpsprodpb/11DA5/production/\\_101152137\\_doggeneric.jpg.webp](https://ichef.bbci.co.uk/news/976/cpsprodpb/11DA5/production/_101152137_doggeneric.jpg.webp)

<sup>8</sup> [Dogs and rural crime | Scottish Outdoor Access Code \(outdooraccess-scotland.scot\)](#)



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