

David Hilton

To: Peggy Delaney
Subject: RE: Can you make 6 copies of this email Sorry I can't do it

Done.

From: Peggy Delaney
Sent: Wednesday, April 26, 2017 8:44 AM
To: David Hilton
Subject: Can you make 6 copies of this email Sorry I can't do it

Good morning Senator Nitka,

I am writing regarding the bill H.218. I hope to be able to testify by phone this morning in front of your Senate Ag Committee but in case the timing doesn't work, I wanted to email you as well. I did testify before the House Ag Committee, but I hear there has been a misunderstanding about what a true Livestock Guardian Dog is (specifically breed) and what their needs are.

We live in Sheffield, VT and have two Maremma Sheepdogs to guard our flock of over 100 sheep. We have had Livestock Guardian Dogs for over 25 years now (previously we lived in Ryegate) and they have been invaluable to our farm business by protecting our sheep from the coyotes. We raised sheep for 5 years before we had our first attack by coyotes and it was devastating. We lost multiple animals and others died afterward from the trauma. Usually coyotes don't do that much damage but this was in the fall when we understand the male pups get kicked out of the den and are out learning to hunt. Usually coyotes just pick off sheep one by one, such that it's often not even noticed because they take everything and leave no evidence.

In any case, we got our first LGD after that and have not had a kill since.

We have, over the years, tried many management techniques with these dogs: fencing, shelter, training, etc. What we have found regarding shelter is that they won't use a dog house if you give it to them. These dogs want to guard, which means they want to see what's going on all around them. Their favorite place is a high spot where they can see as far as they can in all directions. At the least, that's a high spot in the terrain; even better is the top of a round bale, a boulder, etc. We purchased one of those portable dog houses so we could drag it from pasture to pasture and it went unused. We fed them in it, and they would go in to eat, but then come back out and sleep elsewhere where they could better protect their flock. So to require housing like that for LGDs would be a waste of resources for farmers. Additionally, it could be counterproductive in that if a farmer felt shelter was required, they might separate the dog from the flock by putting it in a nearby shed or barn, resulting in kills to livestock or injury/death to a dog who desperately wants to be with his/her sheep and will climb, dig, etc to try to get back to them.

There are specific breeds of dogs who have been bred for many, many generations for the purpose of guarding livestock. Most originated in European countries where they were chosen for their durability to extreme winters. Not just any breed can be tossed out to do the job. Each farmer will need to decide which breed is best for her/him. The breeds I am aware of have incredible dense double coats to protect them from the weather. Ours snuggle down right in the flock of sheep and share body heat and protection from winds. Or they dig down into a round bale, along with the stock.

- Slovak cuvac (Slovenský čuvač)
- South Russian Ovcharka
- Spanish Mastiff
- Tibetan Mastiff
- Tobet (Kazakhstan)
- Torkuz (Uzbekistan)
- Tornjak (Bosnian and Herzegovinian - Croatian Shepherd Dog)
- Vikhan Sheepdog