

Safe Encounters with livestock guardian dogs

Occasionally trails travel through pastures. When entering a pasture, respect the animals – cattle, sheep, livestock guardian dogs (LGDs) and other animals – as well as their behaviour. If you – as a hiker – keep a few **basic rules** in mind, possible encounters between human being and animal should take a peaceful course. In addition, inform yourself using **online maps in advance to find out where you might encounter herds protected by dogs.**



Respect livestock guardian dogs

Due to the return of large predators like the wolf, bear and lynx, livestock in pastures once again need protection. In Switzerland there are about 300 livestock guardian dogs in action. They do their work independently and instinctively. Strange presences around the herd – including hikers – are watched skeptically by the impressive dogs and kept away until guardian dogs are sure that there is no risk to their livestock. The work of the livestock guardian dogs must be respected. The herd and guardian dogs should be disturbed as little as possible.

No companion dogs within herds

When encountering a herd that is protected by livestock guardian, dogs be aware of the increased risk especially for companion dogs: Livestock guardian dogs generally regard companion dogs (close relatives of wolves) as a bigger danger to livestock than human beings. We advise you **not to hike with companion dogs in regions with livestock guardian dogs.** Nevertheless, if you do have your own dog with you and come close to guardian dogs protecting herds, put your own dog on a leash and slowly and calmly detour around livestock.

Codes of conduct during encounters

- **When entering a pasture ...**

Read all information signs. Keep calm, do not disturb or frighten the livestock. Bikers must get off and push bicycles. Hikers slow down and proceed calmly.

- **If a livestock guardian dog barks, runs in your direction, and obstructs the way...**

Stay calm and give time to the guardian dog to make certain that you pose no danger to its herd – the dog is just doing its job. Keep your distance from the animals and avoid brisk movements or provocation with hiking sticks. Once the livestock guardian dog has calmed down, continue on your way. If possible, go around the herd. Do not pet or feed guardian dogs.

- **If you have your own dog with you...**

Companion dogs provoke an increased defensive behaviour by livestock guardian dogs. Put your dog on a leash and keep it under control. Do not try to walk through a protected herd with your dog. Go around. If in doubt, return to the path and go back. If livestock guardian dogs attack your leashed dog, let it go – the dogs will quickly establish a pecking order amongst themselves.

- **If you perceive livestock guardian dogs as a danger...**

Avoid eye contact with the guardian dog, but do not turn your back. Wait calmly at a distance from the herd. If the livestock guardian dog does not become calm after a long period of waiting, retreat.

Brochures and a film

Here you will find **info brochure** PDFs in the form of flyers as well as comics for downloading.

A short **film** clearly explains how one should behave when encountering livestock guardian dogs.