

*Strays kill eleven in Lebanon County*

# Dogs aren't sheep's 'best friends'

BY SHEILA MILLER

**BACHMANVILLE** — They were grisly sights to look at. And these were the lucky ones — the ones who survived the ferocious attacks.

Still skitterish, they nervously move away — bunching into a jarring, jumping mass of wool as they seek protection in numbers and confusion.

Although they didn't realize they had nothing to fear from this stranger in their midst, the sheep out on pasture at the Lebanon County farms of Sero and Virginia Startoni, R1 Hershey and Lloyd Kreider, R3 Palmyra were skeptical of anything unfamiliar that moved. This was not surprising considering the two flocks were attacked by dogs last week — leaving a total of 11 sheep dead and 9 still suffering from extensive wounds.

The Kreider flock was the first to be hit by the canine culprits. According to Kreider, the attack occurred on October 24 at 5:30 in the morning.

"The neighbor's dog and ours started barking and wouldn't quit," recalls Kreider. "My wife got suspicious and turned on the light out in the sheep pasture. She saw two dogs run."

Kreider says he grabbed his shotgun and flashlight and ran out to the sheep pens. "I headed down toward the pond because that's the direction I thought I saw the dogs go. Then one dog, a police-type dog that was on the light-colored side, ran out of the sheep pen.

"I shot at the dog but I was too low. I heard it yelp, so I must have hit it in the foot. But I didn't kill it."

The other marauder was described by Kreider as being a German shepherd with gray and black markings.

The aftermath of the dogs' assault was not a pleasant site, recalls Kreider. On surveying his

pasture, he found 7 dead sheep — 2 were lying in his pond and 5 were scattered along a small stream that runs through the pasture.

Kreider contacted Dr. Leon Reigel of Valley Animal Hospital, Palmyra to try to patch up 5 of his sheep that had managed to survive their assailants' attack. After two hours of stitching, the veterinarian had done what he could for the 'lucky' ones.

In the mean time, Kreider had been on the telephone trying to contact the local dog law enforcement official, Ivo Talamonti, who was away for the weekend. So he called the South Londonderry Township police and Officer Keith Toomey arrived soon after the call was placed.

After surveying the damages, Toomey showed Kreider pictures of stray dogs in the area, but none of them could be identified positively by Kreider as the dogs who attacked his flock. The officer continues to patrol the area in search of the strays.

This is the third time, Kreider says, that he's had trouble with dogs attacking his sheep. He recalls how he had to shoot a Siberian husky several years ago while it was hanging on a sheep's back.

"It gave tears when the owners came to pick up the dog. They had told the dog law officer it was only loose a short time. But, it had no collar on and I had to shoot it or it would have killed my sheep," Kreider recounts.

"If people only realized what these dogs can do, the dogs would stay tied or penned up. All they'd have to see was the damage they did to the sheep, and that would change their minds," he explains. "People don't know they're responsible for the damages their dogs do."

Kreider, who has his flock fenced in by 39-inch high American wire



Justifiably wary, the surviving ewes in the Kreider flock are still nervous and flighty when approached by strangers. Kreider blames the fact that the dogs could hurt so many of his

sheep to the fact that "sheep will run and never make a sound — even when attacked. After a while, they go into shock and just wait for the dogs, as if in a daze."

fence, says he's not going to try anything different in keeping dogs away from his sheep. "These big dogs that cause the trouble can jump over the fences or crawl through the gates. Even though my sheep were in the pens for shelter, the dogs chased them out and started running them down."

The full-time farmer says he'll just have to "keep an eye out" for any stray dogs. "I used to be pretty lenient about strays because I like dogs. But this changes things. My vet bill for the ones that made it was \$70 the first day, and the 7 sheep that were killed I valued at \$100 a piece — those Suffolk-Cheviot crossbred ewes always produced twins and that's worth more money."

The next flock attack by dogs occurred across the fields and a woodlot away from the Kreider farm. Sero and Virginia Startoni lost 4 sheep and are watching the slow, painful recuperation efforts of an equal number of head.

According to Virginia, the sheep were attacked last Thursday morning between 8 and 9 a.m. "I was going down to the barn to feed my two horses and I heard the dogs barking. Instead of going back to the house to get a gun, I ran down to the sheep pasture to investigate."

What Virginia witnessed was two or three "police dogs," gray, white and black in color, running her commercial sheep down. "It was a mess and there was blood all over. If I would have gotten my gun, perhaps I could have shot the dogs. I don't know — I haven't shot a gun for a long while."

When the dogs were finally chased away and the damage assessed, Virginia contacted her veterinarian, Dr. Samples of Hummelstown, and the dog law officer. Together, she and her veterinarian began the gruesome task of carrying the victims to the barn. Two of the sheep had to be destroyed and two were already dead. Several others were severely injured around the head and neck, some could hardly walk.

"It was awful. The dogs had eaten two of the sheep on the sides down to the ribs. One of my ewes has one side of her face gone and can hardly breathe. It hurts me to see them suffering," says Virginia.

One week after the attack, and after three visits by the veterinarian, three sheep still remain in the barn, barely eating and struggling to survive.

Says Virginia, "We'll never get back from the state what we're losing. In order to protect my sheep from another attack, I have to keep them penned up instead of out on pasture. That means I have to start their winter feed early."

This is the third time dogs have attacked and killed sheep on the Startoni property. The previous

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Lloyd Kreider, R3 Palmyra, checks the condition of one of his commercial ewes that is slowly recovering from wounds sustained after dogs attacked her two weeks ago. The dogs went for her head and neck, explained Kreider, pointing out her eye which was severely wounded and is now covered over by a thick scab.



Virginia Startoni keeps a close watch on her 14 remaining sheep. She lost 4 sheep to the dogs last Thursday, and has four other ewes that are in bad condition.



Obviously in discomfort, this ewe may not survive the damage inflicted by stray dogs who opened one side of her face to the bone. Another flock member had to have its ear amputated.



"Here's one we missed," said Kreider, who had the vet out to stitch up the 'lucky' sheep. "We stitched this lamb's neck but missed her front leg and belly that the dogs had torn open. I wash it out every day and treat it, but it's still draining."