

## The Hunter and the Hunted: preventing dog attacks on livestock

**Dr. Raquel Moseley BVMBVSw/integratedBVMedsci(hons)**

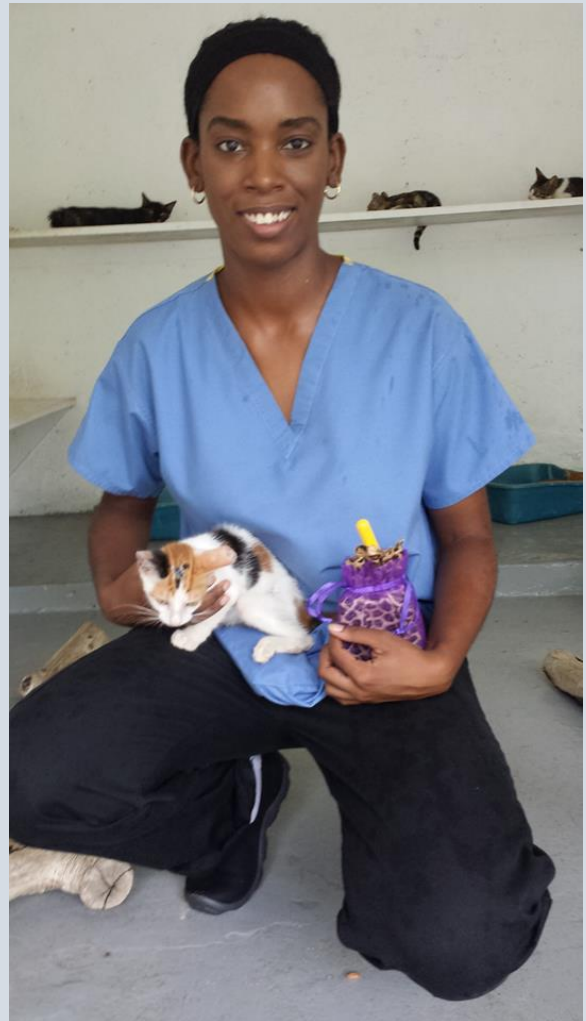
Intentionally done or not, it is never a wise decision to allow your pet dogs off your property unsupervised. Just like young children engaged in unattended play, things can go very wrong...very quickly. Let's explore some of the myths when it comes to the interaction of man's best friends and livestock.

*Myth:* 'Porkchop' wouldn't kill livestock!

*Reality:* Owned or not, a predator's instinct is to hunt. It is true that well fed dogs may not consume fallen livestock, but they will attack and chase them for hours, often leading to death. Sheep and goats, are easy, often completely defenseless targets.

*Myth:* 'Lassie' doesn't roam far from home!

*Reality:* It's impossible to predict or control how far an unleashed dog will go. Unneutered dogs are motivated by pheromones from other unneutered dogs when in heat. 'Lassie' may travel a great distance to accomplish his goal; mating.





*Myth:* Farmers wouldn't hurt my 'Courage', the not so cowardly dog!

*Reality:* Farmers depend on keeping herds of healthy, uninjured animals to maintain their livelihood. Any threat to

this, whilst on their property will be fair game to protect their bread and butter.

*Myth:* Cows and sheep are too big for 'Tiny' to injure!

*Reality:* Whilst some breeds of dogs are distant shadows of their wild dog counterparts, dogs, of any size, working in packs can easily attack and harass to exhaustion and death, prey of any size.

*Myth:* 'Sleepy' needs exercise, so I must let him out at night!

*Reality:* The safest and most enjoyable form of exercise is a walk or run with you; your pooch's most favorite person in the world.

*Myth:* 'Mr. Clean' can't give farm animals any diseases!

*Reality:* Bacterial, viral and parasitic diseases can be spread from dogs to farm animals through faeces or bodily fluids, often causing abortions.

The effects of dog predation are real and apparent and it is now recognized as a major problem for sheep/goat farmers. I encourage



*Bite wounds on a goat*

everyone to think twice and have empathy. It is within your dog's best interest as well as that of the farming community to always have all our canine companions supervised and on a leash when outside of your property. Neutering pet dogs will also greatly reduce the likelihood of abandonment of dogs onto our streets.

*Dr. Raquel Moseley is a Barbadian veterinarian with the Barbados Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA).*