Livestock Worrying Consultation Report

Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture

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Isle of Man Government

Reiltys Ellan Vannin

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Content note

This report contains descriptions of livestock-worrying incidents and quotations from consultation respondents which refer to animals being seriously injured or killed, euthanasia, and the emotional impact of such incidents on livestock keepers. Some readers may find this content distressing.

The Consultation

Livestock worrying, defined as a dog chasing, attacking, or behaving in a way likely to cause harm or distress to livestock, is an issue that affects both livestock keepers and dog owners. These incidents affect animal welfare, may lead to financial or economic losses and cause distress for all involved.

The Police and Farmers' organisations, including the Manx National Farmers' Union (MNFU) and the Isle of Man Flock Masters, have asked the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA) to consider whether the Island's current legislation continues to provide adequate protection.

Other jurisdictions, most recently Scotland (2021) and England and Wales (2025) have strengthened their livestock worrying laws. These updates include stronger penalties, enhanced police powers, broader definitions of livestock, new provisions for recovering costs, and clearer expectations for dog control. Their reforms prompt an important question for the Isle of Man: does the Dogs Act 1990 still meet modern needs and expectations?

The Department held a consultation between Thursday, May 21st and Friday, July 3rd, 2026, to seek views on the principles and objectives that should guide any future approach to the review of livestock worrying laws on the Isle of Man. At this stage, no specific powers, penalties, or detailed legislative text have been proposed. Instead, the Department is seeking evidence on whether the current law aligns with modern expectations, how the balance between livestock protection and responsible dog ownership should be struck, and the general level of tools and safeguards that would be appropriate should reform be taken forward.

The consultation was hosted by the Isle of Man Government Consultation Hub. One additional response was received as an attachment via email. Please note, all percentages quoted in this report are calculated in relation to the total number of responses given to the specific question referenced and rounded to the nearest whole number.

The Responses

There were **247** responses to the consultation questions. All respondents completed at least part of the questionnaire. In addition, the Isle of Man Constabulary provided detailed responses which have been considered alongside the consultation responses where relevant to enforcement, investigative powers, sanctions and operational practicality.

The questions in the first section 'About You' related to the respondent. Of the respondents that answered the residency questions (**245**), **99%** were from the Isle of Man. **One** respondent was a former resident.

Of the individuals who answered the question regarding self-identification (**245**), **87** identified as current or former dog owners. **Fifty-eight** respondents were current or former livestock owners or farm workers. In addition, **six** respondents highlighted that they were both dog owners and livestock owners/farm workers in the comments. A further **86** responded as members of the public, of whom **two** stated they were both dog owners and veterinary nurses who have dealt with injured livestock. The Manx National Farmers Union responded as a *"representative organisation for livestock owners, landowners, tenant farmers".*

Q1: Are you an Isle of Man resident?

Option	Total	Percent
Yes, I am	243	99%
No, I am not	2	1%
Not Answered	2	n/a

Q2: Which option best describes your interest in responding to this consultation?

There were **238** responses to this question and **20** additional comments.

Option	Total	Percent
Member of public	210	88%
Isle of Man Government	2	1%
Business owner or Stakeholder	17	7%
Member of Tynwald	0	0%
Other (please specify)	9	4%
Not Answered	9	n/a

Q3: Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?[1]

There were **245** responses to this question and **11** additional comments.

Option	Total	Percent
Yes, I am (please state the organisation/industry below)	6	3%
No, I am not	239	97%
Not Answered	2	n/a

[1] Please note Q4 asked: "Are you happy for us to contact you regarding your response if we need to?" and has not been included in this analysis.

Q5: Please confirm with which one of the below you most closely identify.

There were **245** responses to this question and **22** comments.

Option	Total	Percent
Livestock owner	54	22%
Farm worker	4	2%
Vet	1	0%
Police officer	0	0%
Dog owner	63	26%
Former dog owner	24	10%
An animal charity	2	1%
Member of the public	86	35%
Other (please specify)	11	5%
Not Answered	2	n/a

Respondents generally answered as individuals (**c.97%**). However, a small number of charities and businesses also responded. One local authority responded. Two respondents selected 'Isle of Man Government' but responded in a private capacity, with the majority (**210**) of respondents identifying as a member of the public.

Interpreting Responses

Whilst the respondent profile questions provide useful background, they should not be treated as mutually exclusive categories. Some respondents selected one category but described additional or different interests in free-text responses. For example, some respondents selected "other" or did not answer the interest question but later described themselves as farmers, smallholders, business owners, animal welfare organisations or members of the public. The profile data should therefore be read as a broad indication of respondent type rather than a precise categorisation of all interests represented.

The Analysis

Once the consultation closed on July 3rd, 2026, the responses were collated and analysed. Several cross-cutting themes recur in the answers to the questionnaire. These themes are summarised below before each question is reviewed individually.

Themes

Most respondents supported exploring stronger legislation and generally did not view stronger law as incompatible with responsible dog ownership. The strongest concerns revolve around animal welfare, the impacts on livestock keepers, penalties and effective enforcement. Education was supported but not as a substitute for enforceable powers. Also mentioned were concerns related to proportionality, responsible dog ownership, off-lead control, public access, insurance, livestock keeper responsibilities, exercise and the enforceability of any restrictions.

Notably, most respondents had not personally experienced a livestock worrying incident, indicating that concern about the issue extended beyond those with direct experience.

Legislation

There was significant support shown for updating current legislation. Several respondents felt that the amendments made in recent years to Scottish and English legislation would be worth adopting on the Island.

"Either Scotland or England legislation looks good. The £40K maximum of Scotland's looks like a jaw dropping moment for some to read, but maybe there should be a similarly high minimum £ mentioned, and unlimited for the upper range. Attaching the 12 month jail time to it is a good deterrent too."

"it keeps happening - this must be stopped. it must be dealt with . Protection of any/all animals MUST be taken. From the info provided about Scotland, England and Wales - why have these provisions not been adopted here and more protection as/when suggested/evidenced by people."

Similarly, several responses indicated that the definitions used in the Manx legislation could be clarified. Respondents highlighted that although used in the text, neither the term "effective control" nor "proper control" were defined in the Dogs Act 1990. Respondents' comments suggest that these terms may require further consideration if reform is progressed, particularly where any future offence depends on whether a dog was on a lead, under close control, or otherwise adequately controlled.

"Close control is very easily misinterpreted by many people. A legal requirement for dogs on leads on agricultural land during breeding season April to August is a must to prevent livestock, wildlife and their young being worried, chased or attacked…"

Enforcement

Respondents generally considered that stronger legislation would only be effective if supported by practical enforcement powers, visible consequences and a realistic ability to investigate incidents. Several comments recognised that livestock worrying can be difficult to prove because incidents are not always witnessed, dogs may leave the scene, and restrictions such as leads or muzzles may be difficult to monitor without adequate

enforcement capability. The Constabulary response reinforced this theme, identifying the need for clear powers to secure evidence, seize suspected dogs where appropriate, and impose control measures that are specific enough to be policed and enforced.

Education

Education was widely supported, particularly to improve public understanding of the welfare, financial and emotional impacts of livestock worrying. However, many respondents did not see education as sufficient on its own. The dominant view was that public awareness should sit alongside enforceable duties, clear expectations for dog owners, effective reporting and meaningful consequences when incidents occur.

Responsibilities

Respondents generally placed primary responsibility on dog owners to prevent livestock worrying, particularly where dogs are off-lead, near livestock or on agricultural land. A smaller cohort believed that livestock keepers also have responsibilities, including securing fencing, managing roaming livestock and providing clear information about where livestock are present. This suggests that any future approach may need to distinguish between primary responsibility for dog control and wider practical responsibilities around land and livestock management.

Repeat Offenders

Comments suggest that many respondents did not consider education and guidance sufficient for repeat offenders. Stronger penalties, behavioural restrictions, ownership bans, rehoming and visible enforcement were raised as possible responses to repeated or serious incidents.

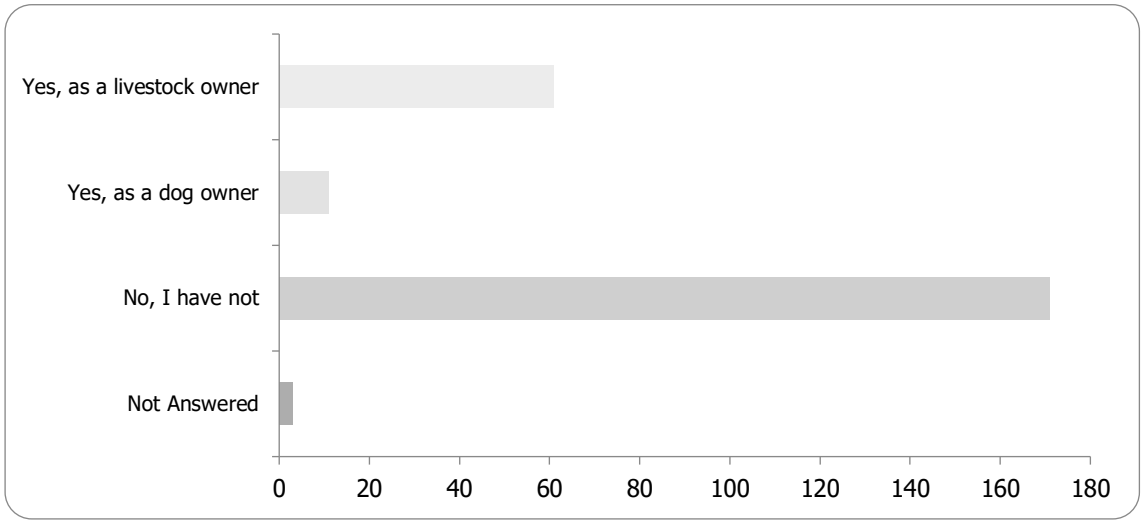
Penalties

Respondents commonly saw fines as only one part of an effective deterrent. Compensation, recovery of enforcement costs, behavioural restrictions and repeat-offender measures were raised repeatedly. This indicates that respondents were concerned not only with the level of fines, but also with whether livestock keepers are adequately compensated, and whether penalties prevent further incidents.

Worrying Incidents

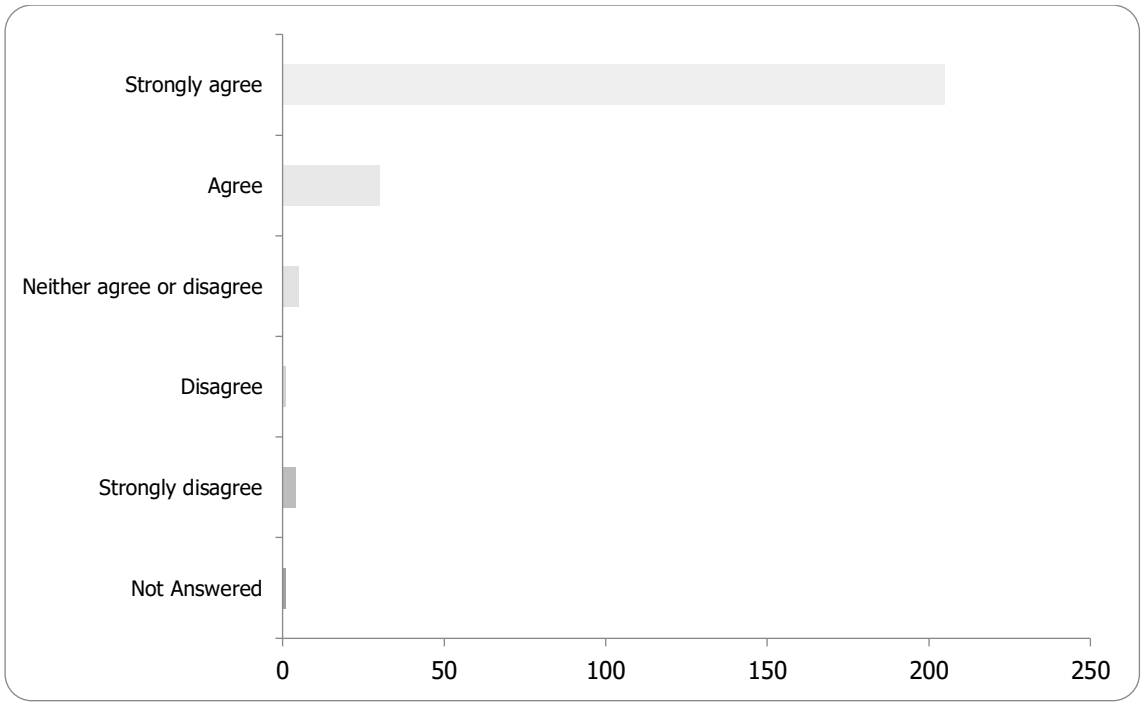
Q6: Please confirm if you have ever personally experienced a livestock worrying incident.[2]

When asked whether they had ever personally experienced a livestock worrying incident, there were **244** responses, and most (**c.70%**) had not experienced an incident. This indicates that views on livestock worrying were not limited to those directly affected and that the issue attracts interest from a broader range of stakeholders.



Q8: I am concerned about the impact of livestock worrying on animal welfare.

When asked whether they were concerned about the impact of livestock worrying on animal welfare, there were **246** responses; **83%** strongly agreed and a further **12%** agreed.



[2] Please note Q7 asked 'May we publish your response?'

Sixty-seven respondents also provided comments on animal welfare, including:

"Farmers have a tough enough time without having to worry about livestock being lost by someone else's neglect. I cannot imagine having to put down a breeding ewe because it has had its throat torn out. You lose the ewe and lambs and any future breeding."

"Having seen the aftermath of sheep worrying, it is something I worry about a lot as a shepherd. We cannot be with all of our sheep every minute of every day. We have to trust people walking their dogs will keep them away from our livestock, this is not always the case. Sheep can die weeks after the event from stress. Most sheep will be checked every 24 hours. A livestock worrying event could take place 10 minutes after you leave the field. Any animals attacked wouldn't get treatment until they were checked the next day. Leaving any animals like that for a prolonged period would be awful and also out of the farmers control."

"Insufficient deterrent on the island and limited police powers mean the threat isn't taken seriously enough."

"Just because we're going to eat them doesn't mean it's OK to be cruel to them."

The comments show a clear and repeated concern that livestock worrying is not limited to visible attacks or immediate injury. Respondents frequently described it as a serious animal welfare issue because livestock can suffer physical wounds, death, miscarriage, delayed stress-related consequences, prolonged distress before discovery, and wider flock-level impacts. Several respondents also linked these welfare concerns to farmer stress, financial loss, perceived weak enforcement, and irresponsible dog ownership.

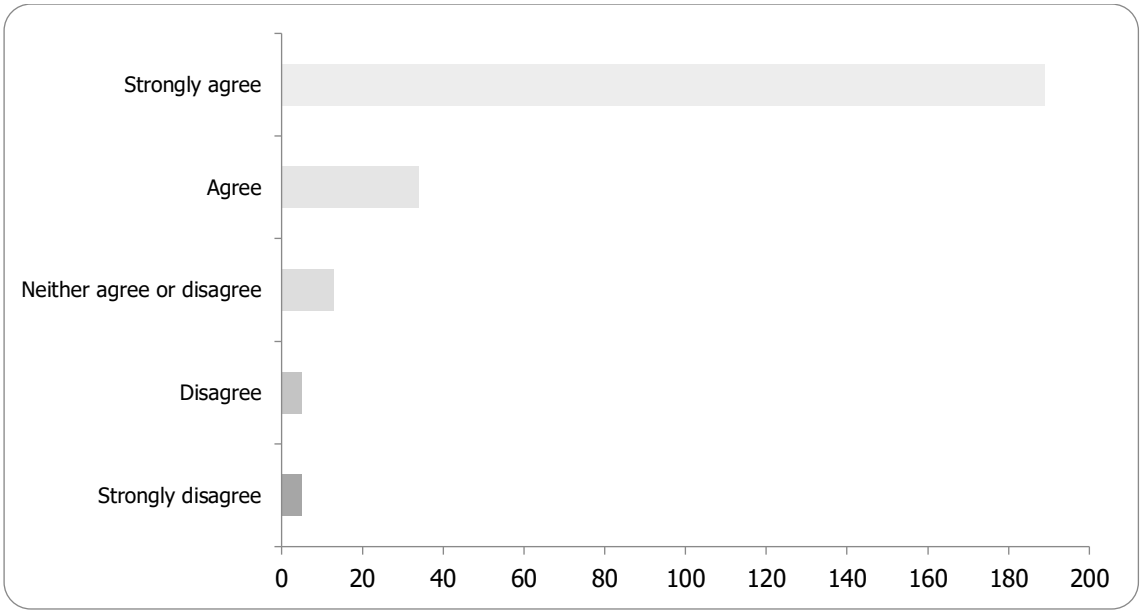
Respondents suggested that some members of the public do not understand the consequences of livestock worrying, particularly the welfare impact of chasing or causing panic even without a direct bite. Education was mentioned as important, but several comments also stressed that education alone would not be sufficient without enforcement, reporting and compensation mechanisms.

A small number of comments widened the issue beyond dogs to other sources of livestock distress, such as guns or fireworks. These may be relevant to wider animal welfare policy, but they are peripheral to this specific livestock worrying question.

One of the respondents who strongly disagreed that they were concerned about the impact of livestock worrying on animal welfare stated that: "*These animals are usually destined for the slaughterhouse. Their welfare isn't a concern then, is it?"* and another respondent who 'neither agreed nor disagreed' with the impact on animal welfare statement said: "*Lots of issues with loose farm animals on island. Would a farmer be held liable for sheep on a road that caused an accident or sheep loose in an area with dogs present ?"*

Q9: I am concerned about the financial impacts of livestock worrying on keepers.

In relation to concerns about the financial impacts of livestock worrying on keepers, there were **247** responses; **77%** strongly agreed and a further **14%** agreed that livestock worrying causes financial concerns for livestock owners.



Comments on this show that respondents who strongly agreed generally viewed livestock worrying as creating financial harm beyond the immediate value of an animal killed or injured. Respondents frequently identified additional costs that arise after an incident, including veterinary treatment, veterinary medicines, carcass disposal or fallen stock charges, legal fees and court-related costs. Some comments also referred to preventative costs, such as higher fencing, even where the livestock owner had not caused the incident.

Several responses also emphasised that the financial impact sits alongside emotional distress and animal welfare concerns, rather than replacing them.

Another repeated theme was that livestock keepers may be left out of pocket because dog owners are not identified, do not admit responsibility, deny their dog was involved, or compensation is difficult to obtain even where there is evidence. Several respondents wanted dog owners to be required to reimburse farmers fully for losses.

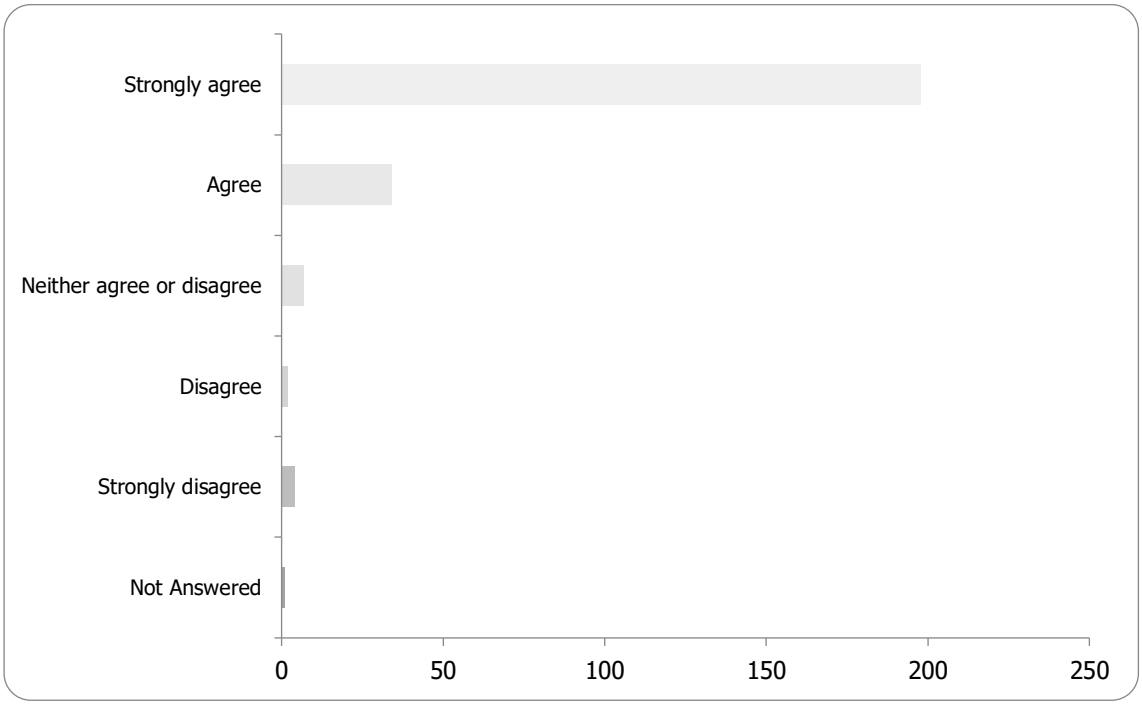
"Farmers and livestock owners have enough financial hardship to deal with without unnecessary vets bills and/or loss of animals."

However, one respondent disagreed: *"It is a bit disingenuous for keepers to argue about concern for animal welfare when the animals in question are often literally kept to be slaughtered."*

A handful of answers included references to insurance, for example: *"I don't wish to appear callous or indifferent but is this not an insurable risk?"*

Q10: I am concerned about the emotional impacts of livestock worrying on keepers.

Similarly, when asked about the statement 'I am concerned about the emotional impacts of livestock worrying on keepers' **81%** of respondents strongly agreed and a further **14%** agreed (of **246** responses).



Forty-four respondents provided additional comments. A dominant theme was the emotional shock of finding animals attacked, badly injured, dead or needing to be euthanised. Respondents described this as horrific, traumatic and unforgettable, particularly where animals were still alive and visibly suffering. Several comments emphasised that the emotional impact is intensified because keepers have cared for, reared or worked closely with the animals affected.

Many respondents referred not only to the distress of a single incident, but to the continuing worry afterwards. Comments described keepers becoming anxious when checking stock, fearing what they might find, feeling reluctant to revisit animals after an attack, or living with constant concern where land is near popular dog walking areas. This suggests that the emotional impact may continue well beyond the immediate event. As such, several comments explicitly framed livestock worrying as a mental health and wellbeing issue for farmers and farming families. One comment linked the issue to the risk of severe mental health consequences for farmers under existing stress.

A repeated point was that livestock keepers may be emotionally invested in their animals, even where those animals are part of a commercial farming business. Respondents compared this attachment to the emotional attachment dog owners have to pets, and some noted that not all livestock keepers are commercial farmers. This theme directly challenged comments suggesting that farmers only view livestock in financial terms.

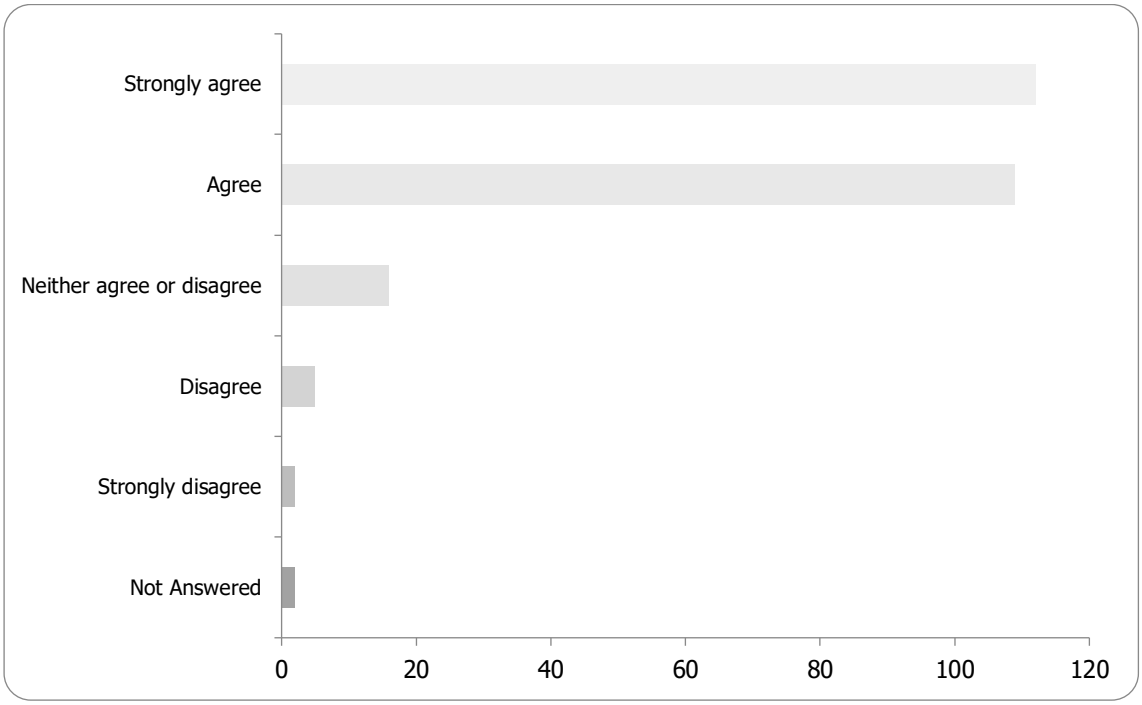
Some comments linked emotional impact to a sense that keepers have limited control over the situation. Respondents referred to uncertainty about what help would be available from police or government, difficulty detaining dogs, lack of repercussions even where evidence exists and the difficult position of farmers who may have to protect livestock while also facing the consequences of harming a dog. One detailed comment also described the fear and isolation caused by hostile or threatening responses from dog owners and others after an incident.

A minor theme was frustration with the framing of the question itself. Some respondents felt that concern about emotional impact was self-evident and that government should focus on action, stronger powers, penalties or prevention rather than asking whether respondents were concerned. In addition, a small number of comments were dismissive of farmers' emotional attachment to livestock. These are minority views rather than representative of the responses overall.

Current Legislation

Q11: I understand the existing law and what it requires of dog owners and livestock keepers.

There were **245** responses to the statement: 'I understand the existing law and what it requires of dog owners and livestock keepers'.

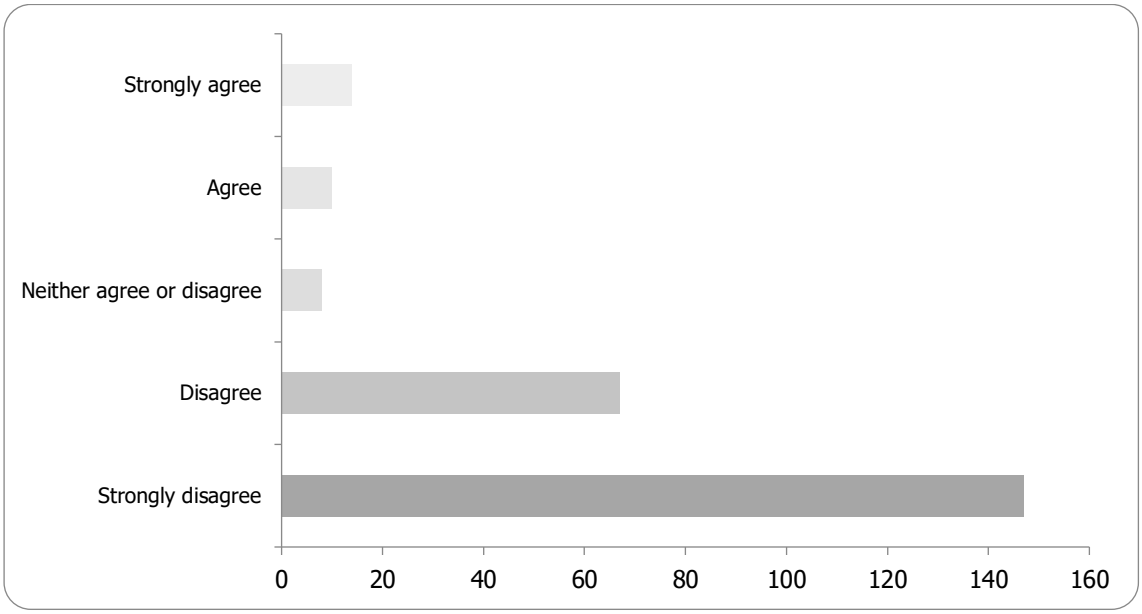


In total, **c.90%** of respondents felt they understood the existing laws. Comments on this statement suggest that many respondents distinguished between understanding the current law and considering it adequate. For example, *'I understand the law, it does not go far enough'*. A repeated pattern was that respondents said they understood, or broadly understood, the existing legal position, but felt that the law is unclear, outdated, too weak, poorly enforced or insufficiently protective of livestock keepers. Several comments also indicated that the consultation summary itself had improved respondents' understanding of the limits of current powers. The Constabulary similarly considered the current framework inadequate when compared with other jurisdictions, particularly in relation to evidence-gathering powers, control orders and the sanctions available following serious incidents.

A practical concern was enforcement. Respondents referred to 'soft' penalties, few prosecutions, limited police powers, lack of follow-up after incidents and dog owners not taking the law seriously. Some comments also suggested that the police may not fully understand the law or may be reluctant or unable to act effectively: *"You always hear about some of the rules, but very rarely if at all do I think I've actually heard of someone being prosecuted, fined, or the dog put down".* However, it is clear from the Constabulary responses that they have a unique and important perspective, appropriate understanding of the issues, and feel restricted by the limited powers available to investigate and enforce effectively.

Q12: I believe current legislation is sufficient and does not need strengthening.

When asked if respondents 'believe current legislation is sufficient and does not need strengthening', **87%** disagreed (**247** total answers, of which **60%** strongly disagreed).



Most comments argued that the law needs to be strengthened, either because penalties are too weak, enforcement is ineffective, police powers are too limited, or dog owners are not being held properly accountable. Many respondents also used this question to propose specific changes, including mandatory leads near livestock, higher fines, compensation for keepers, stronger seizure or investigation powers, DNA testing, and closer alignment with legislation in Scotland or England. The Constabulary response was consistent with these broad concerns, aware that their powers may be insufficient to investigate all incidents effectively. The Police also identified specific operational gaps, including limited powers to enter and search premises, seize a suspected dog and obtain samples or bite impressions where there are reasonable grounds to suspect involvement in livestock worrying.

Consultation responses include:

"If it was sufficient you wouldn't be doing this consultation."

"Our Isle of Man legislation is absolutely pathetic!!!! It does not provide any deterrant [sic] whatsoever.....proven by the very fact that the problem continues"

"The number of incidents we have every year is unacceptable so either penalties need to go up or enforcement needs to get easier or both."

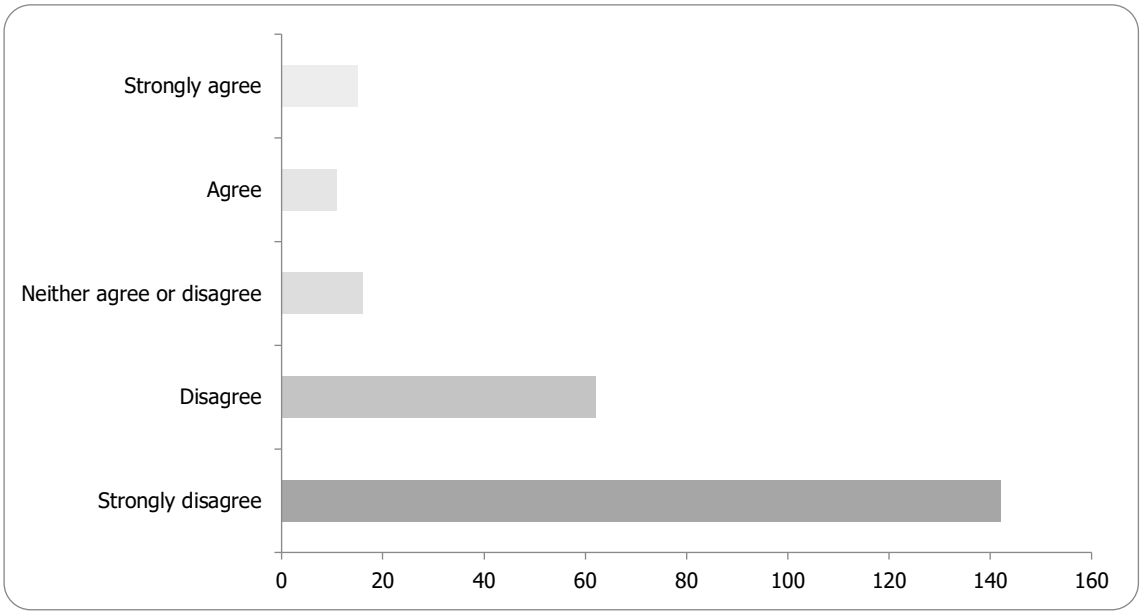
"Police should have the power to find dogs responsible rather than only being able to 'catch them in the act'"

"It should permit DNA testing and give the police powers equivalent to their English or Scottish counterparts"

"However more and more legislation is also concerning. Commonsense is required."

Q13: I am concerned that any tightening of legislation may limit the ability for dogs to be properly exercised under their owner's control.

In relation to the statement: 'I am concerned that any tightening of legislation may limit the ability for dogs to be properly exercised under their owner's control' there were **247** responses and c.**83%** disagreed or strongly disagreed.

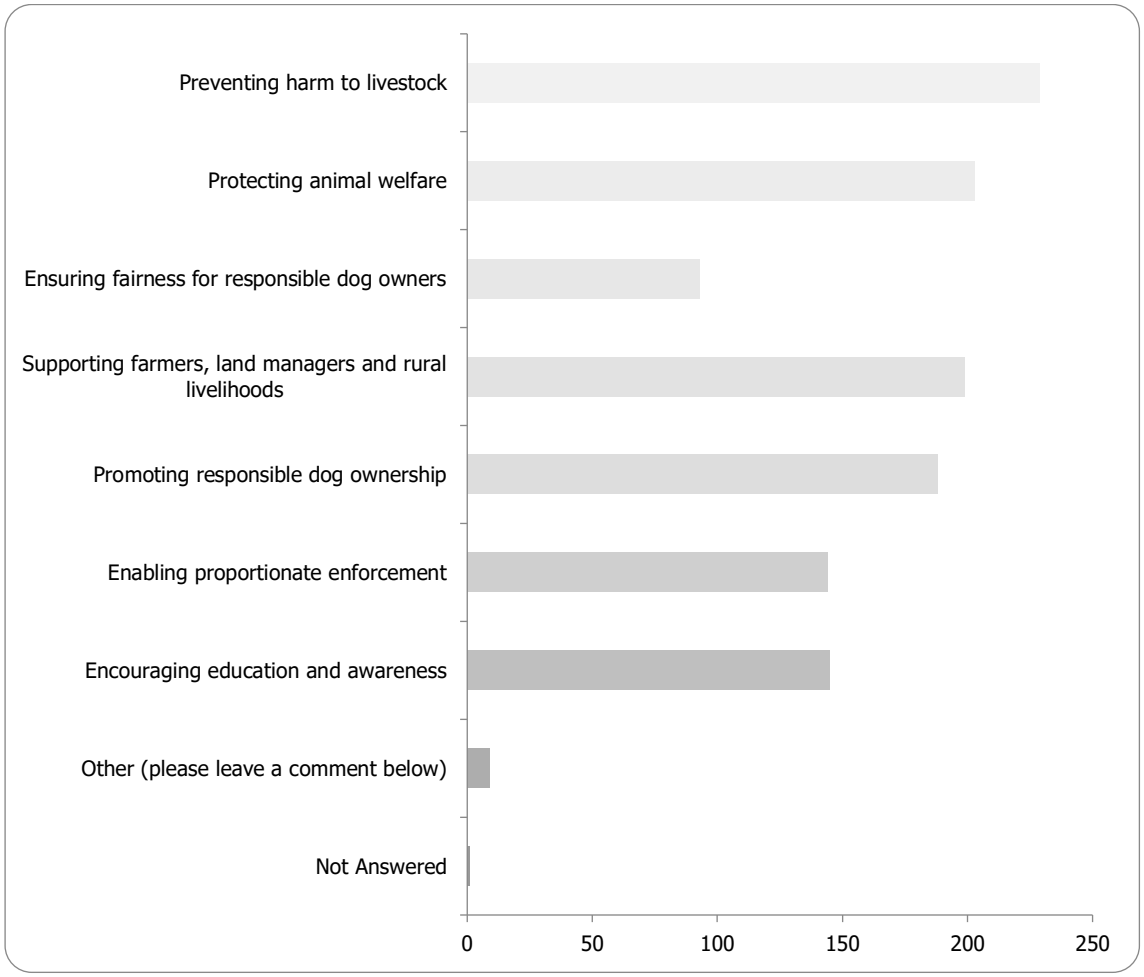


Comments on this statement show that most respondents did not consider tighter livestock worrying legislation to be an unacceptable restriction on dog exercise. The majority view was that dogs can still be properly exercised if kept on leads near livestock, taken to areas away from livestock, or exercised in secure dog fields or designated spaces. However, a smaller but important group of comments recognised that dogs need appropriate exercise and that legislation should be framed carefully so that trained working dogs, responsible owners, and genuinely controlled off-lead exercise are not unnecessarily restricted. This balance also reflects the Constabulary's view that the issue is primarily one of irresponsible ownership and that clear, targeted requirements should support prevention without unnecessarily affecting responsible dog owners.

Livestock Worrying Controls

Q14: Which of the following should be the main objectives of any policy or legislation around livestock worrying? (Please tick all that apply).

When asked what should be the main objectives of any policy or legislation around livestock worrying **93%** of respondents chose 'preventing harm to livestock'.



As can be seen from the table below, in this multiple choice question the strongest support was for objectives focused on preventing harm to livestock, protecting animal welfare, supporting farmers and rural livelihoods and promoting responsible dog ownership. Objectives relating to enforcement, education and fairness for responsible dog owners were also supported, but at lower levels. This suggests that respondents primarily saw the policy problem as about preventing harm and protecting livestock and keepers, with education, fairness and proportionality viewed as important but secondary considerations.

"All of the above should be considered but at the top of any list should be protecting livestock."

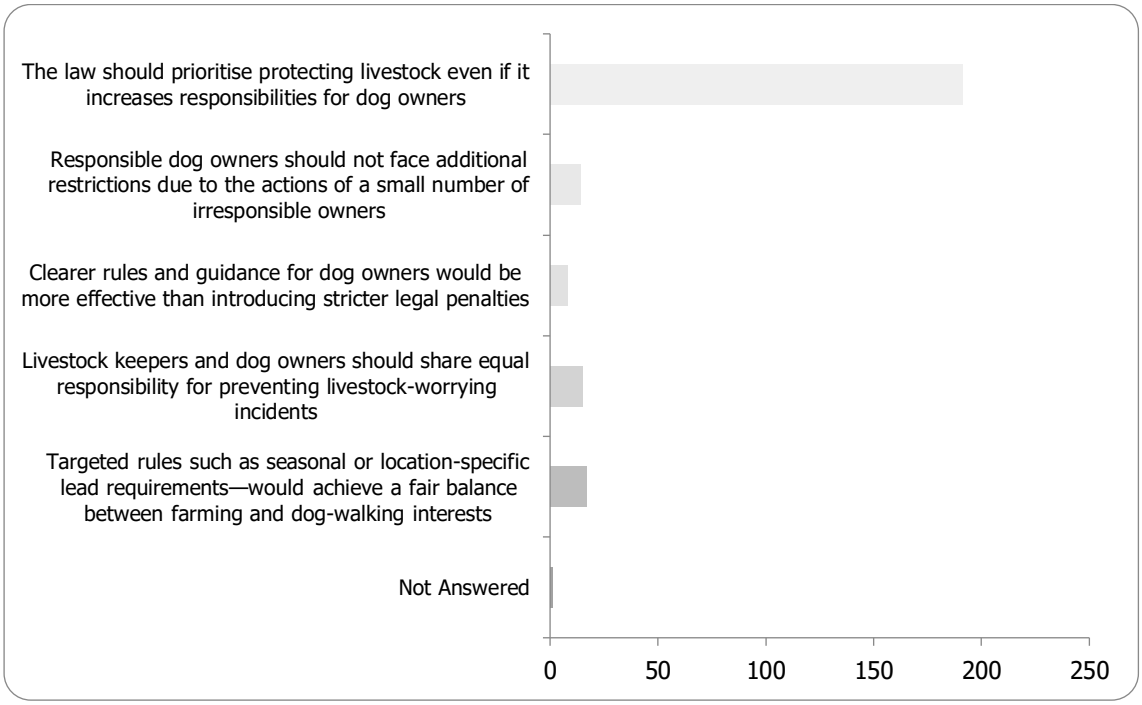
Option	Total	Percent
Preventing harm to livestock	230	93%
Protecting animal welfare	204	83%
Ensuring fairness for responsible dog owners	93	38%
Supporting farmers, land managers and rural livelihoods	200	81%
Promoting responsible dog ownership	189	77%
Enabling proportionate enforcement	145	59%
Encouraging education and awareness	146	59%
Other (please leave a comment below)	9	4%
Not Answered	1	n/a

"I wouldn't have thought that any reasonable person could object to any of these objectives, but I think the emphasis should be on protecting livestock and its owners from the consequences of dog worrying. A 'responsible dog owner' should have nothing to fear from more stringent legislation."

"Responsible dog owners would not be affected by stronger legislation. Progressing legislation is the priority, supported, but not replaced by, programmes for awareness and education. There are no excuses, and only legislation gives the power to prosecute, which is the only deterrent."

Q15: How should the law balance the interests of livestock keepers and responsible dog owners?

When asked how the law should balance the interests of livestock keepers and responsible dog owners, respondents overwhelmingly (c.**78%** of **246** answers) felt that the law should prioritise protecting livestock even if it increases responsibilities for dog owners.



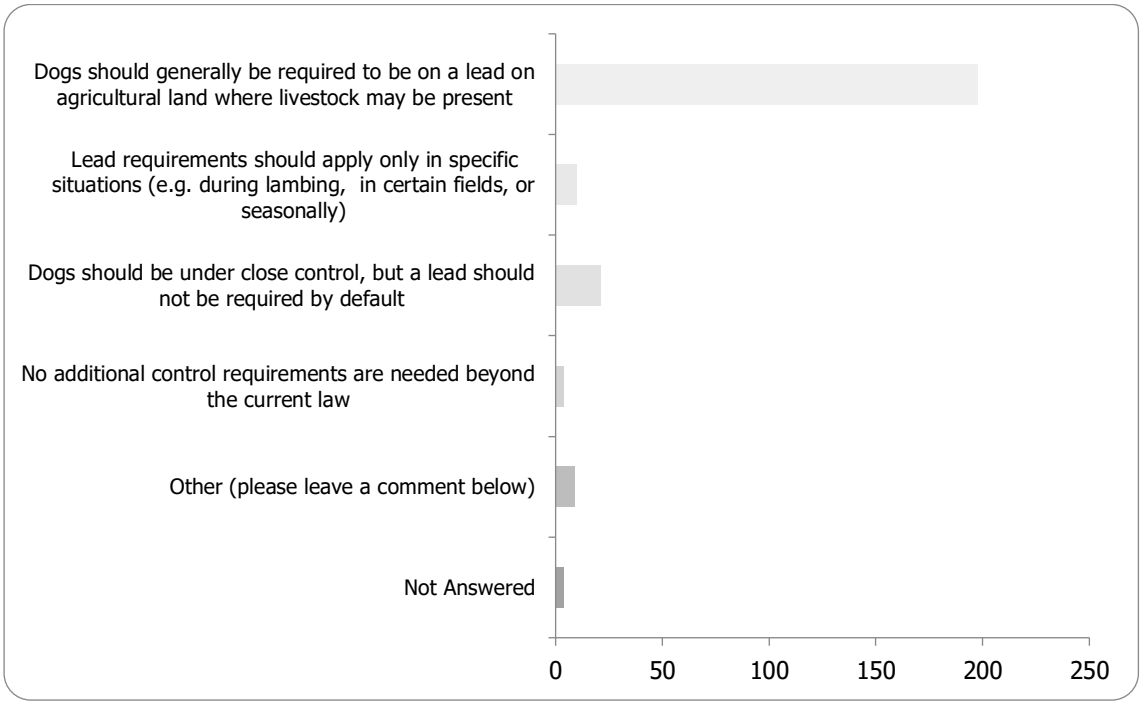
Respondents framed "balance" as requiring strong protection for livestock keepers while not disadvantaging genuinely responsible dog owners. A repeated view was that responsible dog owners already keep dogs under control, avoid livestock, use leads where necessary, and should therefore have little to fear from clearer or stronger legislation. Many comments placed primary responsibility on dog owners, especially where dogs are off the lead, on private agricultural land, near livestock, or not under effective control. Again, a smaller cohort argued that livestock keepers also have responsibilities, particularly around secure fencing, roaming livestock and clarity over public access areas.

"Responsible dog owners will already be taking all preventative steps they can to ensure their dog is under control and has the required training. Improving the standard of dog ownership can only be a good thing for our island."

"Keepers need to take better responsibility with properly fencing livestock. In any other business, owners would ensure adequate protection of their stock."

Q16: Thinking about how dogs should be managed around livestock, which of the following best reflects your view?

On how dogs should be managed around livestock, there were **243** total responses and most people (**81%**) felt that dogs should generally be required to be on a lead on agricultural land where livestock may be present.



Most comments supported a requirement for dogs to be on leads on agricultural land or wherever livestock may be present. A repeated concern was that "close control" is too subjective and can be misinterpreted, particularly where owners overestimate recall or where livestock are not visible until it is too late. Several respondents wanted the wording strengthened in option one from "should generally be" to "should always be", while others argued for short leads rather than extendable leads. Once again, a smaller number of comments suggested that legislation should recognise genuinely trained or working dogs and avoid treating all off lead control as irresponsible. Some respondents also raised

practical issues around signage, fencing, adjacent land, seasonal rules, and wider public safety.

"A well trained dog does not need a lead, but to protect livestock, and to mitigate against irresponsible people who do not have well trained dogs, then using a lead should be required in certain circumstances."

"Control is far more important and appropriate than a lead. For example, if a dog is on an extending lead it could still lunge towards livestock causing flight response in the livestock."

"I would like to caveat by adding that there are some dogs walked off leash that are better trained and more under the owner's control than some walked on lead."

"Remove the word 'generally' and the first option says all that is sensible and necessary."

The Manx National Farmers Union (MNFU) felt strongly that: *"Dogs MUST always be on a lead anywhere where livestock is present."* and noted that "*It is too ambiguous to rely upon vague or personal interpretations of being under reasonable control, presenting further difficulty for Courts and Police during investigation and prosecution. Again, responsible dog owners will already understand the need for the lead, and will not be affected…*".

Penalties

Q17: What general principles should guide how penalties are structured? (Please tick all that apply).

With regard to what general principles should guide how penalties are structured, respondents most strongly supported penalties being structured around deterrence and predictability, with deterrence selected by **64%** of respondents and clear rules and thresholds by **57%** (of **245** responses). Comments reinforced this pattern, with many respondents arguing that current fines and enforcement do not provide a meaningful deterrent and that penalties should be clear, consistent and strictly enforced. While some respondents supported proportionality and recognised that accidental escapes or immediate action by dog owners should be treated differently from repeat, reckless or deliberate failure to control a dog, the overall emphasis was on stronger consequences for irresponsible ownership. Compensation for livestock keepers, including direct and consequential losses, was also a repeated theme.

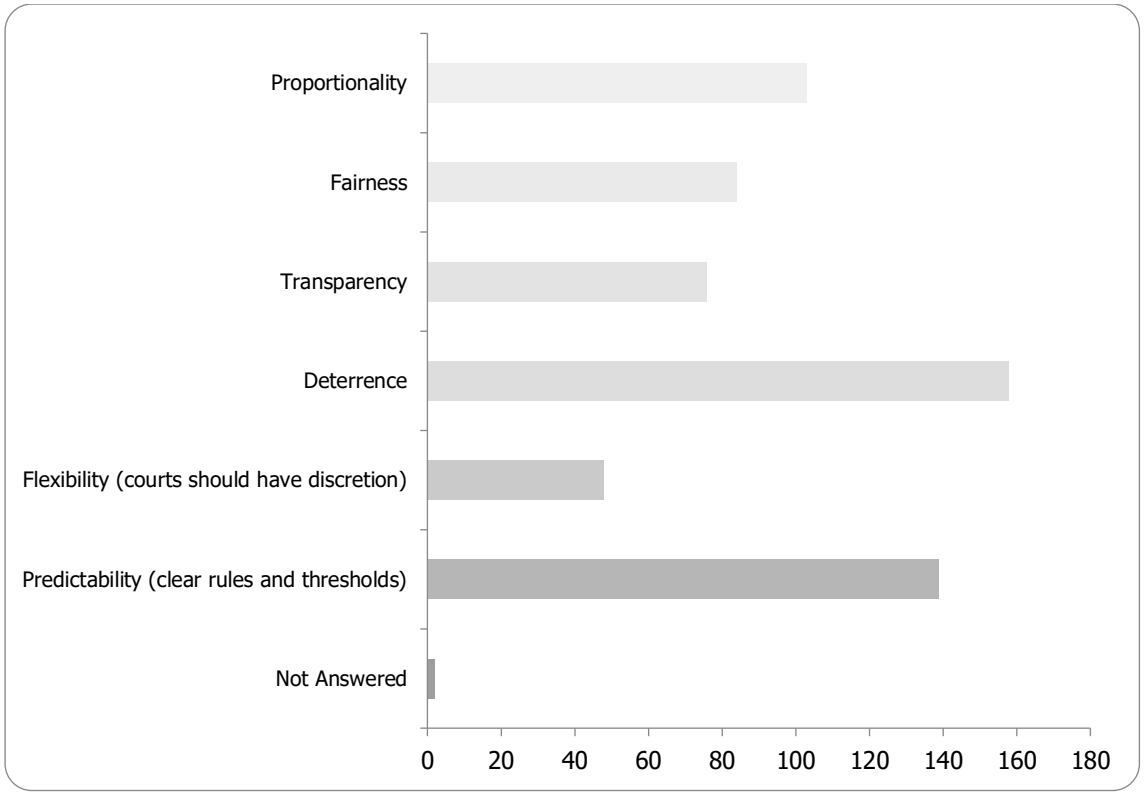
The Constabulary supported stronger sanctions, including compensation and cost recovery, and considered that control orders need to contain clear, enforceable conditions if they are to prevent further incidents.

A smaller number of comments argued for severe sanctions such as confiscation, bans on ownership or destruction of dogs, while a minority highlighted the need to consider all facts, including stock-proofing and the circumstances of the incident.

"Penalties should be appropriate for the offense that has occurred, Emphasis should be placed on punishing the owner not the dog. The owner is responsible for what the dog has done as they have failed to keep it under control."

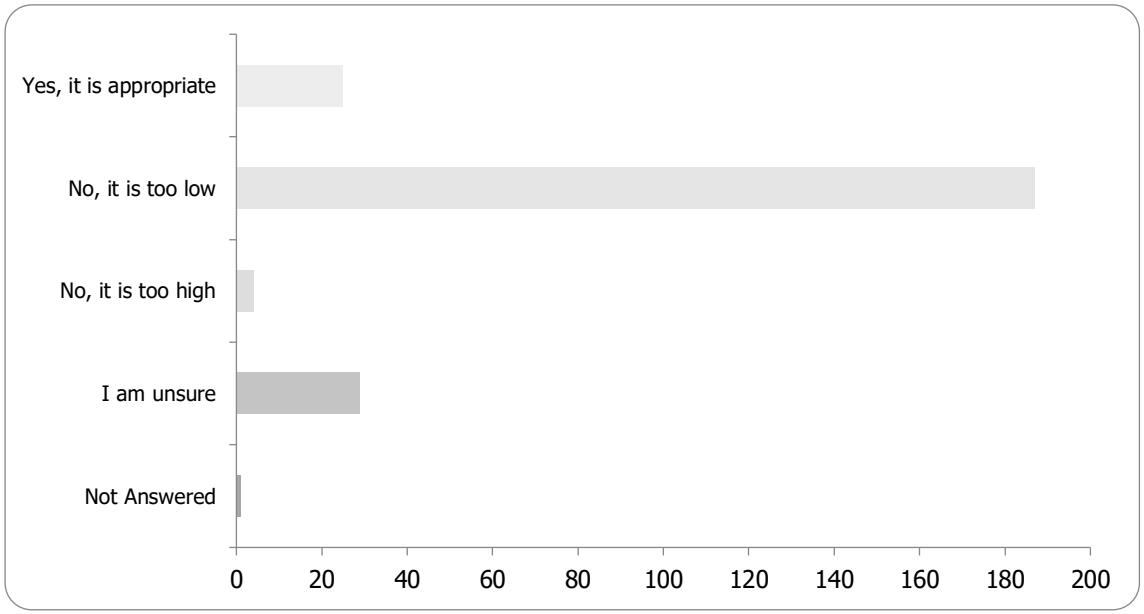
"…You must ALWAYS keep your dog on a (short) lead under close control when on someone else's land. If any person, pet or livestock are harmed or worried through a dog owner's unwillingness to do this, there should be onerous consequences for the errant dog owner. Yes there should be proportionality. A perpetual offender, caught on camera, ignoring warning signs, whose dog causes an issue should quite rightly face the full and reasonable force of the law. A dog owner whose dog may have slipped the laws for some reason and escaped would have a stronger case for clemency"

"Accidents do happen, and dogs do escape from homes. However, owners or those caring for them are ultimately responsible if an animal escapes. All facts, including stock proofing of livestock areas, should be given as evidence. Ultimately, if a livestock owner is not maintaining stock proof boundaries, they are at increased risk of their livestock either escaping into areas where dogs are exercised or dogs accessing their livestock areas."



Q18: Do you believe the current maximum penalty of £5,000 is appropriate for the objectives of livestock worrying legislation?

When asked if they believe the current maximum penalty of £5,000 is appropriate for the objectives of livestock worrying legislation three quarters of respondents (**188**) felt it was too low (**76%**), compared with **25** respondents, or **10%**, who considered it appropriate. There were **246** responses to this question.



There were 67 comments on this question, including:

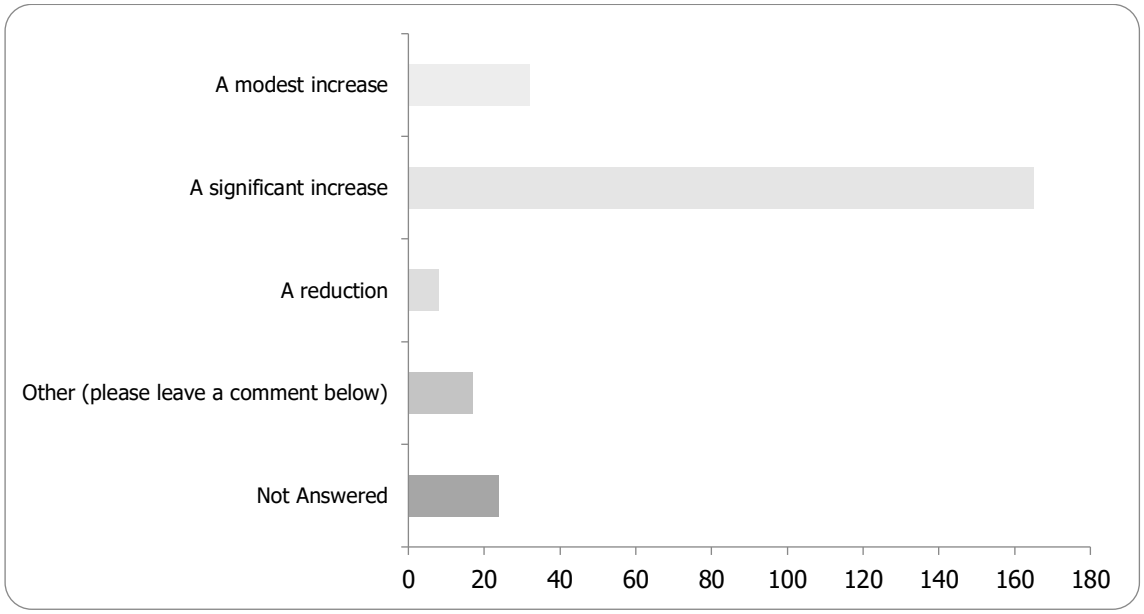
"Definitely far too low. An average commercial sheep is £ 250-00 An average Pedigree Suffolk sheep £1000-or over Lambs today 1/7/2026 at the Meat Plant on average £200-00 each"

"The fine should be limitless and decided by the number of animals attached [sic], injured or killed. The financial loss to the farmer should also be added into the fine as compensation."

The MNFU commented that: *"Unlimited fines and potential to be sent to prison gives Courts more scope to enforce and provides a stronger deterrent for dog owners along with better evidence gathering to enable prosecution, additionally powers to confiscate dogs and prevent returning them to offending dog owners must be included."* The Constabulary also supported the view that stronger sanctions may be necessary in serious cases, including clearer provision for destruction orders where livestock has been injured or killed, and a significant increase in fines where appropriate.

Q19: If you believe the penalty should change, what general level do you think would be proportionate?

Respondents indicated that a significant increase would be needed to act as a deterrent.



In this follow-up question, **166** respondents (**67%**) supported a significant increase in fines. Comments commonly argued that £5,000 does not reflect the financial, welfare nor emotional impacts of livestock worrying, particularly where multiple animals are injured, killed, aborted or lose future breeding value. Respondents repeatedly linked the penalty levels to the effectiveness of deterrence and wanted compensation for livestock keepers proportional to the harm caused. Many suggested that penalties should be based on severity, number and value of animals affected, consequential losses, repeat offending and the conduct of the dog owner. Another theme was that penalty levels alone will not be effective unless offences are investigated, prosecuted and publicised.

The MNFU suggested that the Island should *"mirror recent English law passed for unlimited fines".*

Many respondents argued that compensation or reimbursement should be available in addition to any fine. However, a smaller number of respondents considered £5,000 already substantial or warned that large fines may not deter those who cannot pay, but these views were in the minority.

This point is relevant because the value of livestock varies significantly depending on the animal's role within a flock. For example, a prime breeding ram may be worth £1,000 and commonly upwards of £2,000, whereas a fat lamb (reared for slaughter within a year) would cost approximately £150-250 each. This context helps explain why many livestock owning respondents did not consider the current maximum fine sufficient to reflect the potential scale of loss, particularly where multiple animals, breeding stock or consequential losses are involved.

"£5,000 should be the minimum!"

"Has anyone actually been fined? If more people were fined it would be a deterrent. The fines should be proportionate - they should take into consideration of the knock on effects to farmers not just the market value of the livestock killed/injured."

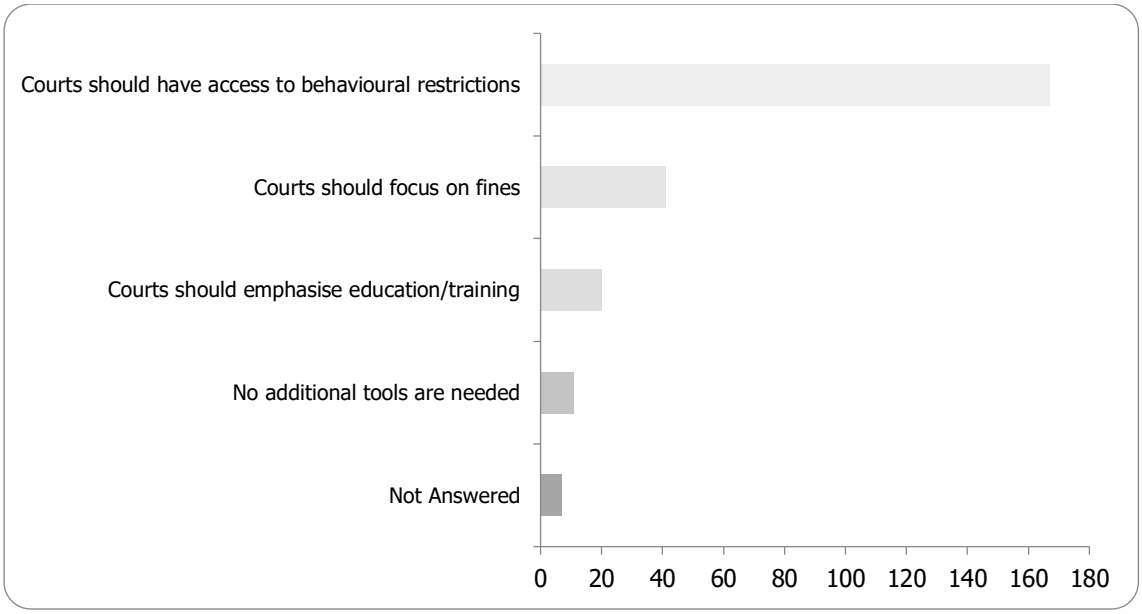
Similarly, most dog owners also agreed that the fine should be proportional to the damage done. However, one dog owner felt that:

"£5,000 is already a lot of money and you could replace a lot of sheep"

This indicates that some respondents may not have been aware of the true financial cost of livestock worrying, or of sheep farming more generally.

Q20: What principles should guide how courts may respond to repeat or serious livestock worrying incidents?

In relation to the question about the principles that should guide how the courts may respond to repeat or serious livestock worrying incidents, there were **240** responses and **c.68%** of respondents believed that the courts should have access to 'behavioural restrictions' (which may include limitations on when and where a dog can be walked, specific control or dog management requirements such as leads or muzzles, training, or physical restraints.).



There were several comments that stated that fines were important, and any behavioural restrictions should be supplementary, not an alternative to fines. In addition, there were multiple comments arguing that livestock worrying incidents demonstrate that the owner is not suitable to keep dogs and there should be a dog ownership ban for repeat offenders. Some respondents preferred the idea of removing the dog from the owner and rehoming it, especially where the problem was owner behaviour rather than the dog itself. The Constabulary response similarly emphasised prevention and repeat-incident management, arguing that where behavioural restrictions are used, they need to contain precise conditions capable of being monitored and enforced.

However, a substantial number of comments called for dogs involved in repeat or serious attacks to be destroyed. In addition, some people support increased education, but usually alongside fines/restrictions. Other respondents doubt training would be effective for irresponsible owners.

A few comments questioned how behavioural restrictions such as leads and muzzles would be monitored and enforced in practice. Operational feedback from the Constabulary supported this concern, noting that a general requirement to keep a dog "under control" may be too broad to police effectively. Suggested control order conditions included fixed lead requirements, muzzling in public, secure accommodation, microchipping or other identification, neutering where appropriate, restrictions on who may walk the dog, and/or exclusion from specified areas plus a requirement for third-party liability insurance.

"Behavioural restrictions sound great but the policing of them is even more time consuming. It's a struggle to get the police with dog attacks never mind making sure someone's dog has a muzzle on"

"Courts need to be able to impose restrictions on dog owners to prevent a similar situation occurring in the future."

"Educational measures should always be implemented on dog owners, however this should run alongside fines. Fines alone wouldn't always deter 'repeat offenders' or those able to pay fines…"

"Courts should be punishing the dog owner, not the dog. However, if livestock were not kept secure, the the [sic] farmer should also bear some responsibility and be directed to secure their fields."

Several comments wanted to see bans on ownership considered:

"The Police should have the power to investigate the crime, gather evidence and remove the dog and the Courts must have the power to ban the owner from keeping dogs in the future along with imposing fines and recovery of costs, and impose adequate custodial sentence."

"Ban future ownership. A drink driver can expect a driving ban. A dog owner who doesn't control their animal properly needs a similar ban."

"Courts should be able to ban people who are repeat offenders from keeping dogs"

"If people are consistent offenders or show a lack of willingness to control their dogs they should be banned from owning them and their dogs rehomed"

A small but notable group of commentors supported very severe sanctions, including the destruction of dogs involved in repeat or serious incidents.

Q21: What principles should guide how costs arising from enforcement action are allocated? (Please tick all that apply).

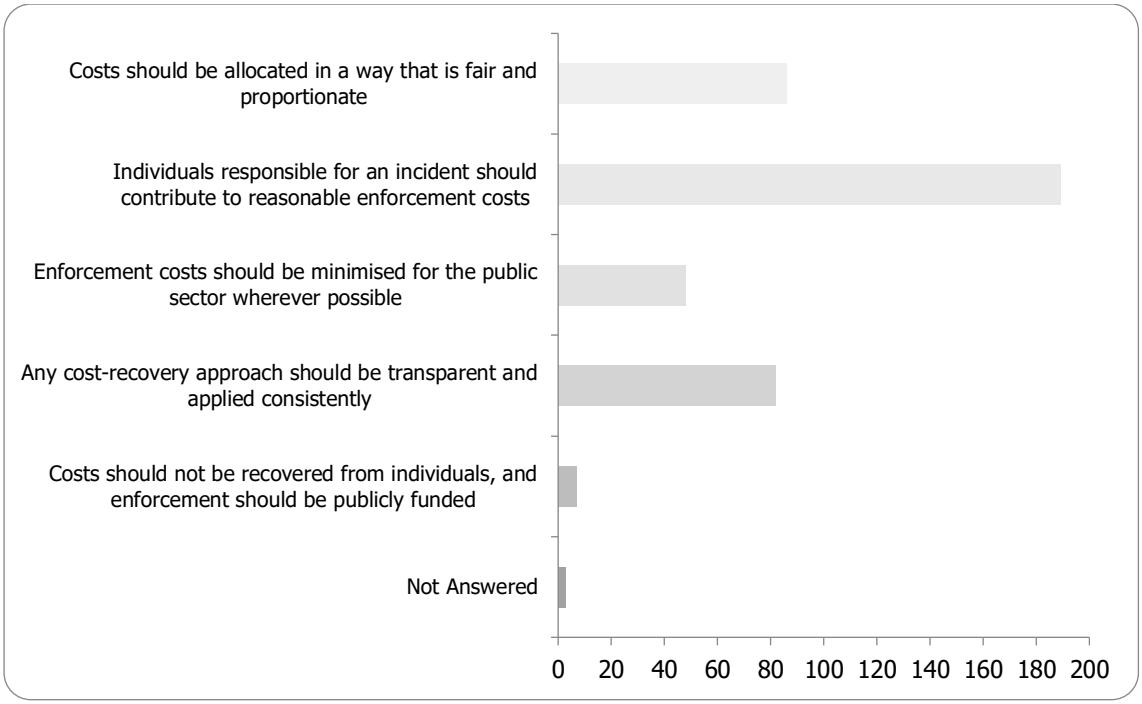
When asked about the principles guiding how costs arising from enforcement action are allocated, respondents largely believed (**78%** of **244** responses) that the individuals responsible for an incident should contribute to reasonable enforcement costs.

Transparency, proportionality and consistency were also important considerations. While a small number of respondents preferred enforcement to remain publicly funded, most comments reflected a view that the costs arising from irresponsible dog ownership should not fall primarily on livestock keepers or the public sector. This is consistent with the Constabulary's suggestion that legislation should provide for compensation to livestock keepers and reimbursement of reasonable costs associated with keeping a dog while an investigation is undertaken.

Comments included:

"It would be reasonable that those responsible for causing the death or injury of livestock through allowing dogs under their control are the primary contributors to enforement [sic] costs whatever is meant by this - it is not clear exactly what enforcement costs is meant."

"Why should owners not be entirely responsible for all the consequences of their actions or inactions? Having a dog is a choice, not a necessity."



Option	Total	Percent
Costs should be allocated in a way that is fair and proportionate	86	35%
Individuals responsible for an incident should contribute to reasonable enforcement costs	190	78%
Enforcement costs should be minimised for the public sector wherever possible	48	20%
Any cost-recovery approach should be transparent and applied consistently	83	34%
Costs should not be recovered from individuals, and enforcement should be publicly funded	7	3%
Not Answered	3	n/a

Enforcement

Enforcement was a topic mentioned repeatedly across almost all questions, from livestock owners, businesses, members of the public and dog owners. The overwhelming sentiment was that for any new legislation to be effective it must be enforced. There was also significant recognition that enforcement would be challenging. The burden of proof required to prosecute offenders is not often met because incidents are rarely witnessed. Similarly, questions were raised about the practicalities of enforcing lead, muzzle or exclusion requirements on agricultural land. The Constabulary also identified the need for investigative powers that allow evidence to be secured before prosecution decisions are made.

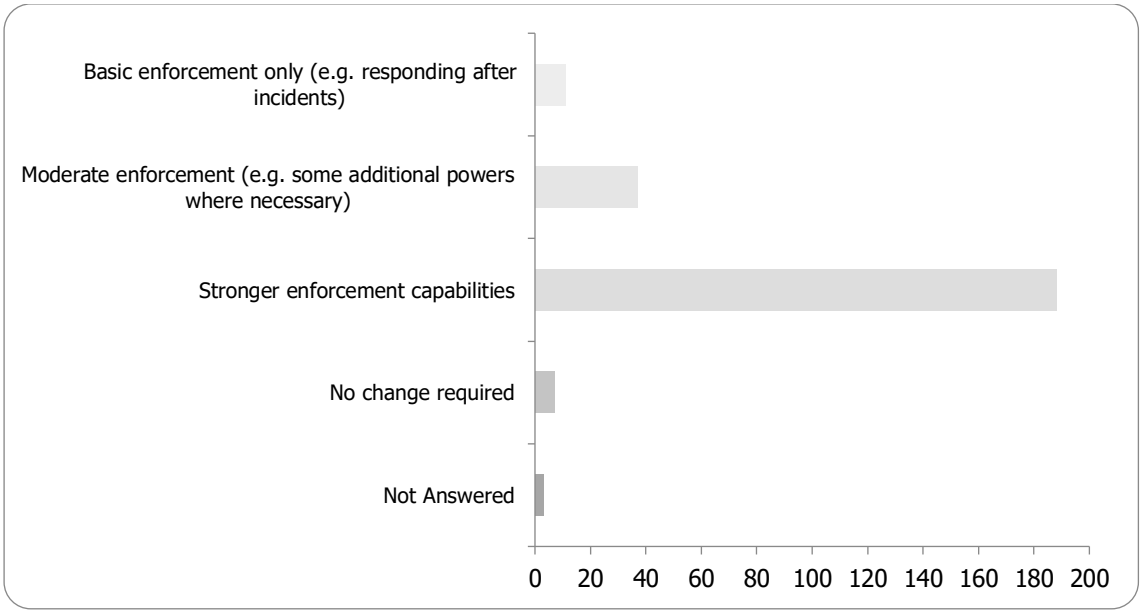
Q22: What level of enforcement capability do you think is generally appropriate for dealing with livestock worrying?

Asked 'what level of enforcement capability do you think is generally appropriate for dealing with livestock worrying' there were **244** responses and most answers (**76%**) suggest respondents want stronger enforcement capabilities.

Respondents widely viewed stronger enforcement capability as necessary if any future reforms are to be effective. Comments repeatedly highlighted concerns that incidents are difficult to investigate, that dogs are rarely caught in the act, and that enforcement agencies require practical tools to identify offenders and gather evidence. A recurring theme was that stronger legislation alone would have limited value unless supported by realistic enforcement and visible consequences.

"'Worrying' is animal cruelty, treat it as such. Just because the dog owner isn't directly making the livestock bleed or frightened, doesn't mean they're not responsible for it."

"If enforcement, is only ever after the incident, how will it help deter or reduce any new incidents. Dogs in reservoirs where they shouldn't be, dogs off lead on footpaths through fields and farms. Enforcement has to be increased."



Q23: What level of police seizure powers do you feel is appropriate in cases of suspected livestock worrying?

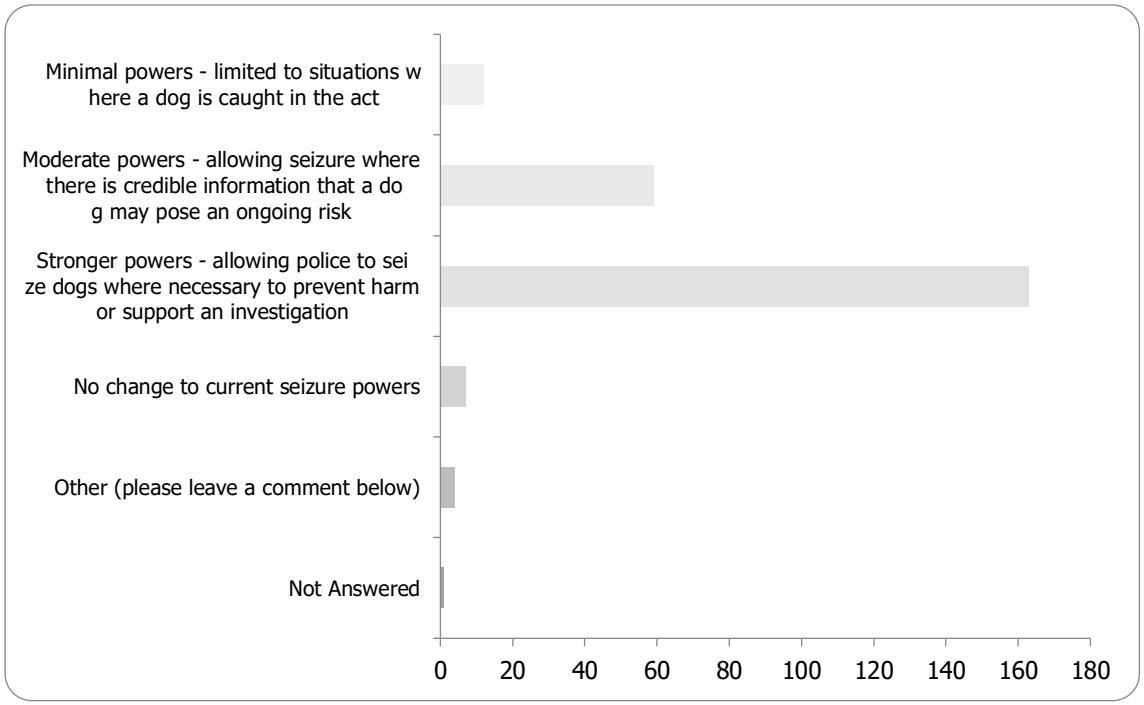
Respondents most commonly supported stronger police seizure powers, with **66%** (total responses **246**) preferring powers allowing police to seize dogs where necessary to prevent harm or support an investigation. Comments directly relating to seizure powers focused on enabling police to intervene before further incidents occur, the circumstances in which seizure should be available, and ensuring that there were adequate safeguards to prevent innocent dogs being seized. Several respondents argued that current powers are ineffective because action can only be taken when a dog is caught in the act. The Constabulary response supported expanded powers to seize dogs on agricultural land, roads or paths, and to detain suspected dogs where necessary to preserve evidence or prevent further harm.

However, a recurring concern was about proportionality, including the welfare implications of long-term kennelling, the cost of housing seized dogs and the need for a clear evidential threshold before seizure occurs. Many comments also drifted into broader issues such as DNA testing, evidence gathering, dog destruction and wider enforcement powers, which are more closely related to investigative powers and sanctions than seizure itself.

"It is also important to consider the practical implications of seizure powers. Where would seized dogs be housed, and who would be responsible for the associated costs…"

"Only when confirmed information that it is the correct dog/s."

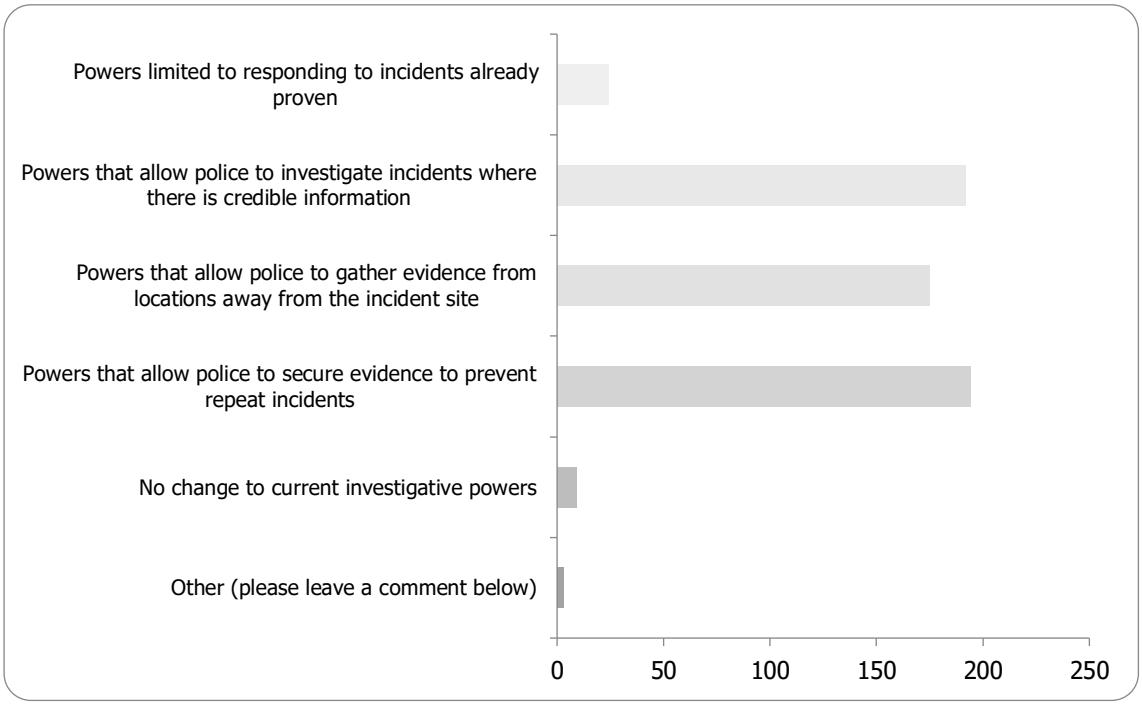
"Police must be instructed to always seize dogs where livestock/ other pets have been harmed / killed. DNA testing must be introduced as in other juristrictions [sic] to provide evidence at court"



Q24: Thinking in general terms, what level of investigative powers do you believe is appropriate for dealing with livestock worrying incidents?

There were **247** responses to this question. Many comments indicate that respondents believe current powers are insufficient to investigate livestock worrying effectively and that stronger evidence gathering powers are necessary if legislation is to be enforceable in practice. Suggestions repeatedly mention support for DNA testing, seizure of dogs where appropriate, and the ability to gather evidence away from the immediate scene of an incident. Respondents also frequently linked stronger investigative powers with deterrence, arguing that offenders are unlikely to change behaviour if they believe identification and prosecution are unlikely. The Constabulary response was consistent with this view and supported powers to investigate, enter and search premises, seize the dog and take DNA samples or bite impressions where there is credible evidence of involvement in a livestock worrying incidence.

A smaller number of comments emphasised proportionality, due process and the need to ensure powers are exercised fairly and only where credible evidence exists.



Option	Total	Percent
Powers limited to responding to incidents already proven	24	10%
Powers that allow police to investigate incidents where there is credible information	192	78%
Powers that allow police to gather evidence from locations away from the incident site	176	71%
Powers that allow police to secure evidence to prevent repeat incidents	195	79%
No change to current investigative powers	9	4%
Other (please leave a comment below)	4	2%
Not Answered	0	0%

DNA Testing

A number of respondents suggested the introduction of DNA testing or DNA databases for dogs as an investigative tool. Police feedback also supported the ability to take DNA samples, in specific cases, but acknowledge that it requires further consideration of proportionality, cost, practicality and the evidential threshold for taking samples, and/or bite impressions, from a suspected dog where there are reasonable grounds to link it to a livestock worrying incident.

"Area of offence should not be restricted to agricultural land and police should have the power to restrain and seize the offending animal and order DNA testing."

"Because it's difficult to prove, there should be DNA testing for suspect dogs"

"If a dog is identified after an incident then the police should have the power to go into the premises and take the dog"

"Powers to seize dogs and DNA test where necessary. Not all cases are clear cut and straight forward therefore more evidence will be needed in some cases."

Public Awareness and Reporting

Q25: The Isle of Man should place greater emphasis on public education around livestock.

There were **246** responses and **36** comments to this question, with **92%** agreeing that more should be done to raise awareness of livestock, farming and responsible dog ownership on the Island, of those **74%** strongly agreed that the Island should place greater emphasis on public education around livestock.

Respondents believe that many people are increasingly disconnected from farming and the countryside and may not fully understand the consequences of livestock worrying. Comments focused on improving understanding of animal welfare, responsible dog ownership and the realities of livestock farming, particularly through school-based initiatives and public awareness campaigns.

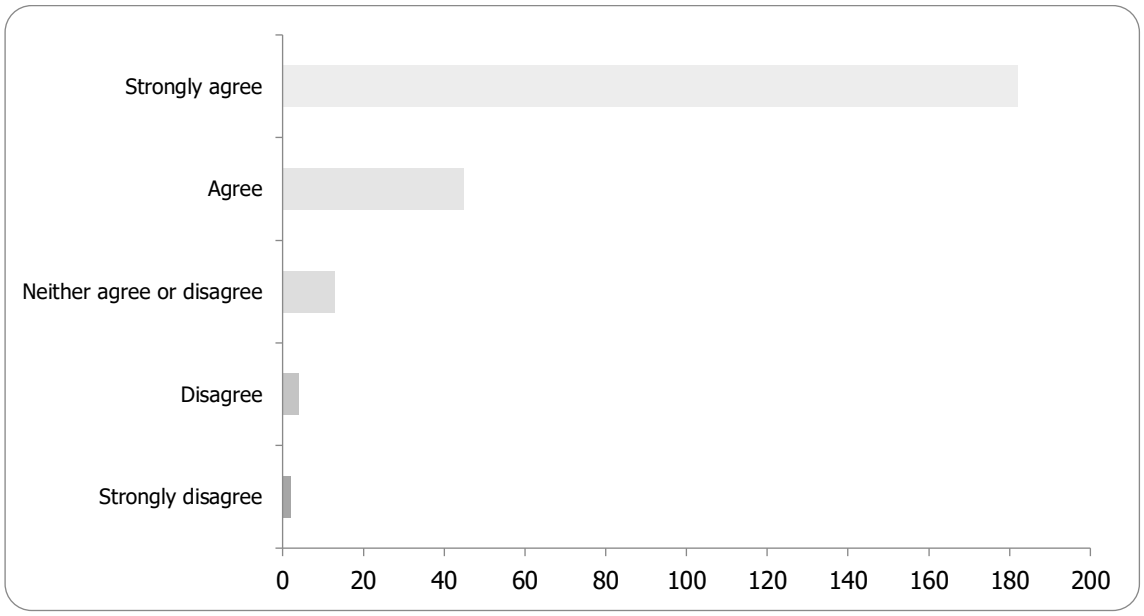
"We live on a rural island and take great pride in our biosphere. This should be reflected by supporting farmers and rural communities who help maintain it."

"This is a farming community on island, we're all rural/semi-rural so let's celebrate that by educating"

"The NFU have been doing this for the last 4 years - going into Primary Schools and educating children. Government need to support this approach and educate dog owners"

However, several respondents disagreed, arguing that awareness of the issue is already widespread and that some incidents occur not because of a lack of knowledge, but because individuals ignore existing advice. As a result, respondents frequently suggested that education should complement, rather than replace, effective enforcement, penalties and clear expectations for dog owners.

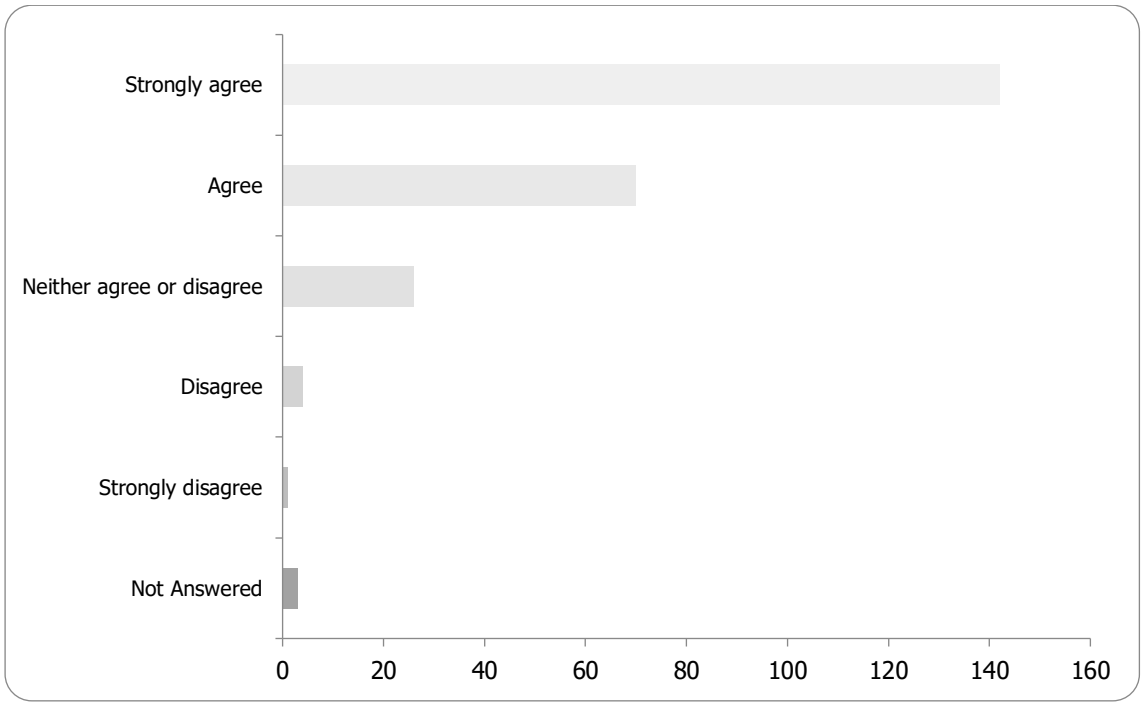
"There's lots of education - some simply won't listen and don't care"



Q26: Any legislation should provide the power for the Government to issue statutory guidance.

There were **243** responses and **11** comments in response to this question. Respondents generally supported legislation that would provide a power for Government to issue statutory guidance, with **87%** agreeing or strongly agreeing with this proposition. However, the relatively small number of comments suggest that many respondents were unclear about what statutory guidance would involve in practice. Several comments asked for clarification of what guidance would cover, how it would be used and whether it could effectively alter legal requirements without further legislative scrutiny.

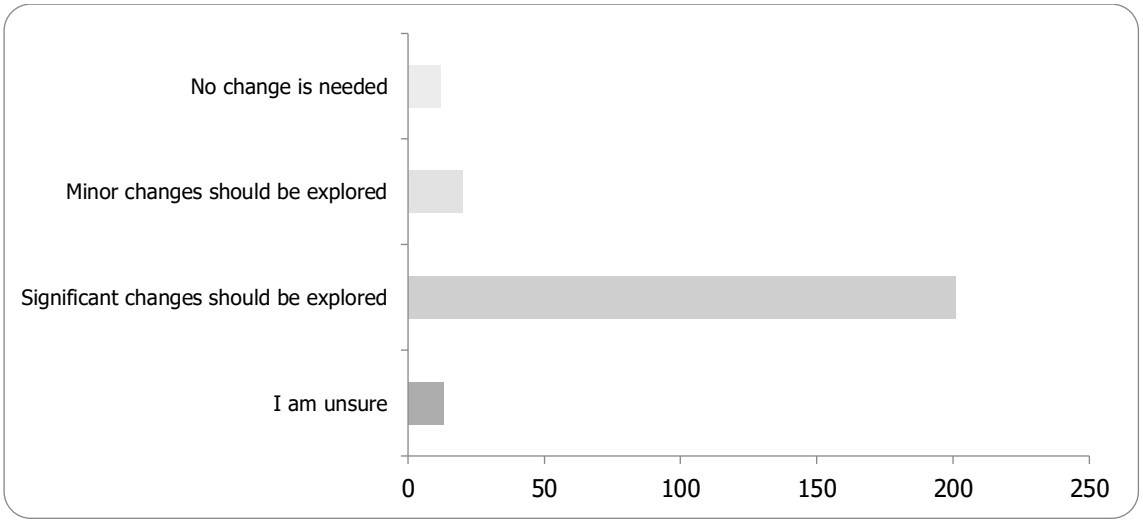
Those who commented positively generally viewed guidance as a sensible and uncontroversial tool for providing additional clarity, particularly if developed by individuals with relevant expertise. Overall, responses suggest broad support for the principle of guidance, but a more mixed understanding of its purpose and potential role within any future legislative framework.



Q27: Do you believe there is a need to explore changes to livestock worrying legislation?

Responses to the final question indicate strong support for exploring changes to livestock worrying legislation. Of the **247** respondents who answered the question, **202** (**82%**) supported significant changes, compared with **20** (**8%**) who supported minor changes and **12** (**c.5%**) who considered that no change was required. Comments suggest that respondents' support for reform was driven less by any single proposal and more by a broader perception that the current framework does not provide an adequate deterrent or effective means of enforcement. Throughout the consultation respondents repeatedly referred to limited police powers, difficulties gathering evidence, a perceived lack of prosecutions, and concerns that current penalties do not reflect the impacts of livestock worrying. The Constabulary's responses support that overall conclusion, particularly in relation to seizure, evidence gathering, control orders, compensation, deterrents and sanctions.

A recurring theme was that stronger legislation should be accompanied by effective enforcement, while many respondents also emphasised that responsible dog owners would be unlikely to be adversely affected by clearer or stronger rules. A smaller number of respondents favoured retaining the current approach or focusing primarily on education and awareness rather than legislative change.



Summary

The consultation indicates substantial support for reviewing and strengthening the Isle of Man's livestock worrying legislation. Respondents did not generally see stronger controls as a hindrance to responsible dog ownership, but repeatedly stressed that any reform must be practical, proportionate and genuinely enforceable. The Constabulary's views reinforce this conclusion from an operational perspective, identifying practical specific limitations in the current framework and highlighting the importance of setting out stronger powers to investigate incidents, enforce rules and sanction irresponsible dog owners. The Police recognise that they currently do not have powers that can be used effectively to combat serious or repeat offenders in all circumstances.

Overall, the consultation has provided the Department with clear evidence that there is public support for reform to the Island's current livestock worrying legislation. Respondents and the Constabulary wish to see stronger enforcement powers and harsher penalties for negligent dog owners, a fair balance between livestock protection and responsible dog ownership, and clearer arrangements for reporting, enforcement and awareness.