

NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday 5th March 2013

---Begins---

Keep your dog under close control this Spring.

Nothing is more evocative of spring than seeing new lambs by their mothers out in the Quantock countryside.

But, please remember that it is at this time of year when sheep and lambs are at their most vulnerable. Quantock Rangers, local farmers and the Police would like to highlight the problems that some dogs can cause to livestock on the hills.

From 1st March dog owners are required by law to keep their dogs on a lead when being walked across Open Access land. In all other areas of the countryside dogs should be kept under close control. It's not just the physical attacks that cause harm but simply allowing a dog to chase sheep may cause ewes to abort or become injured.

Owen Jones, Quantock AONB Ranger said "I'm a dog owner myself and there's nothing I enjoy more than walking over the hills with my spaniel, but I have to remember that sheep, lambs and wildlife can easily be disturbed if the dogs, no matter how well trained, are not under very close control".

Owen went on to say "There have been many times when Quantock Rangers have had to deal with the aftermath of dog attacks on sheep and in all cases I believe they could have been easily avoided - it's never easy visiting a farmer to tell them that their livestock has been injured or killed".

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If your dog does kill or cause harm to livestock, you can be liable for a significant fine and for the value of the livestock harmed - your pet may also be dispatched, the cost of which will also have to be borne by you. Moreover, if your dog is actually seen in action harassing livestock it could be shot on sight.

If you actually witness an attack in progress, call **999** otherwise any incidents witnessed should be reported to the Police on **0845 456 7000** or directly to the Quantock Hills AONB Office on **01823 451884**.

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Notes for editors:

For further information on enjoying the countryside visit www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk

To find out more about the Quantock Hills AONB look on our website at www.quantockhills.com

The Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was the first to be designated in England in 1956. An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is exactly what it says it is: a precious landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them.

The following statements form the Quantock Hills Vision; they describe the AONB we would like to see in twenty years time.

- ◆ Conservation of the distinctive and beautiful character and diversity of the AONB landscape, encompassing Quantock heaths, woods, farmland, parkland and villages.
- ◆ Detailed understanding of and protection for the Quantock historic environment and conservation of existing man-made elements retaining both the ordinary and the exceptional.
- ◆ Productive farming and forestry businesses that support and enhance the intimate scale, historic character and biodiversity and wildlife habitat over the whole Quantock landscape.
- ◆ A maintained level of tree cover containing and increased percentage of native species.
- ◆ Harmonious design in any new development in and around the AONB.

- ◆ A sustainable level of Quantock tourism and recreation maintaining the quality of experience for AONB users and contributing to the local economy without harming landscape and biodiversity.
- ◆ Easily available information helping to protect the Quantock environment and residents, while maximising public enjoyment and appreciation of the area.

There are 40 AONBs in England and Wales (35 wholly in England, 4 wholly in Wales and 1 which straddles the border). Created by the legislation of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949, AONBs represent 18% of the Finest Countryside in England and Wales. Their care has been entrusted to the local authorities, organisations, community groups and the individuals who live and work within them or who value them.

The Quantock Hills AONB Service is supported and funded by Somerset County Council, Defra, Sedgemoor District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council.