



Action A.12 MedWolf

Report phase 1

Responsible: WWF Italia Onlus

Report realized by: Marino A., Pollutri A. and Tramagnini D.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE

The launch of this first phase of action A12 involved the collaborators of project MedWolf in meetings (*focus groups*) on the territory:

- 3 October: Arcidosso
- 4 October: Roccalbegna
- 10 October: Scansano
- 11 October: Pitigliano
- 17 October: Massa Marittima
- 18 October: Grosseto

The meetings aimed to focus the farmers' experiences on the territory about the relation zoo-technics and predators, and, more in depth, their analysis about risks' prevention methods and instruments, about management of administrative/bureaucratic procedure to obtain the damage compensation and of the carcasses' disposal.

Moreover, in terms of process the *focus groups* allowed the participants to live a listening experience that legitimate their positions and, at the same time, set the stage for the next debate about the playing interests. After each meeting has been drafted a report describing the farmers' opinions exactly as they presented them (see attachment 2).

WHAT EMERGED

1. "THE PROBLEM IS NOT ONLY OF THE FARMERS, BUT OF EVERYBODY!"

In these first meetings emerged a conflict situation that, to this day, reached a high level of anxiety, caused mainly by years of institutions' negligence toward this set of problems (*"We've been talking for 20 years...talking and talking... For 20 years, they've been kidding us!"*). The lack of confidence to institutions is then very important (*"There is no political will to solve the problem"*), though farmers recognize in them the only interlocutors able to build up the conditions (*"There will never be a debate between farmers and decision makers, we have a long way to go – to arrive to who got the power to change things - and we can't do it all by ourselves."*) and the answers the territory needs (*"We are not interested in who's guilty, we want the solutions!"*). The farmers point of view goes beyond



their farm boundary: the concentration of cattle-raising activities in Maremma is not compatible with the current wolves' quantity (*"In the Province of Grosseto there is the half of the total number of sheets of the region, wolf could stay in all the other parts of Italy!"*) and this dangers the continuity of zoo-technics, of everything it concerns (*"If farms close down, ceases also the activity of cheese factory, cooperatives, category associations, and of projects like this one too"*) and, more in general, of the territory (*"Farmers must be protected as they are the heart of our economy"; "Farmers are the Tuscan landscape keepers, that same landscape that everybody envy us!"*).

2. "WHY DO WE DEFEND THE WOLF?" alias "IF I SEE THE WOLF I KILL IT!"

Wolf's presence is immediately identified as the main problem to be solved. In farmers' opinion, there has never been the political will to manage it and at this moment a radical institutional intervention is needed (*"Intelligent people should correct the laws before it is too late!"*). For this purpose, it is necessary to restore a balance in the system wolf/cattle-raising, to work in favour of the conservation of all system's elements.

If the wolf is the "Problem", the first solution that emerged in all territories is «wolf's removal» from the specific geographical area. This answer, after confrontations, is sometimes reformulated in «wolf's cull», a less drastic action, which can anyway grant the balance achievement. The same result can also be reached through the wolf's isolation from cattle-raising areas (*"Fence the wolves in a delimited area"*), so dividing the two parts of the system. The more radical positions toward this aspect, let get a glimpse of the complexity of the dynamic wolf's conservation / acceptance: the first aspect could be reached only taking into consideration the second one (*"Farmers love their animals more than other people. Animal rights activists don't care about sheep and not even about wolves, because they know in this way what is their fate... here wolves don't die a natural death"*)

From the comparison of the positions expressed by farmers clearly appears their interest: their work and the chance to live on it with dignity (*"Milk and meat's price instead of redoubling as all other goods is decreased. Farmers have many problems, perhaps wolf is one of the smaller."*).

3. "THERE ARE NO DEFENCES AGAINST THE WOLF"

Prevention is becoming an obliged transition to conservation, but the farmers declare the big expenses they and the community have to face. Expenses deriving from feeding costs, veterinary treatments and watch dogs insurance; from cattle food and medicines for epidemics prevention of herds, kept in closed room from June to November; from costs for the construction of fences, shelters and other systems for herds protection.

A. FENCES

Most part of farmers evaluate positively this instrument concerning with night recovery of herds, but at the same time underline several use limitation for daily prevention:

- Immobility, while grazing needs to change soil frequently;



- Unsuitableness, for the area type of soil (*"In our territory when it rains a lot, fences don't hold up and therefore can be installed only where grass is cut shortly"*);
- beauty (*"The quantity of installations would transform our territory in a lager"*);
- usability, fences would limit the use of these plots of land by hunters and mushroom seekers...;
- costs, of installation (paid in advance) and of herds maintenance
- (*"Sheep must be vaccinated more frequently...cattle feed costs...grazing is needed by sheep, but also by territory"*);
- Impossibility, some hard soils don't allow the installation of fence posts and, moreover, in rented lands farmers cannot build up fences

B. DOGS

They are evaluated as the most efficient prevention system; also as night defence for sheep on grazing. Limits:

- Cost: Feeding and insurance (*"they became a tax, it is an additional expense which must be done"*)
- They are a problem with people (*"My dog bit a cyclist and a pedestrian"*). If you have an activity (farm holiday or direct selling of products) they can be dangerous.
- Hunters don't want them (*"They poisoned a dog of mine"*)
- Dogs follow a herd, if the farm got fragmented lands it is not possible to use the dogs: too many would be needed.
- They work if they are a family, like a pack (*"There must be a hierarchy, just in this way they can face a wolves pack."*)

C. WARD

The shepherd's presence with sheep on grazing is a good way of prevention, even if it presents two big limits:

- Night ward is not economically and physically sustainable (*"We have been told we must adapt to a modern sheep farming, everything changes...but how could we work day and night?"*)
- Ward is useless if we can't defend from attacks (*"They told us that if we saw the wolf, we couldn't disturb it and that we should call the Province"*)

D. DISSUADERS

This auditory systems are totally ineffective, as after a short period, predators get used to their presence. Some consideration that support this position:

- useless because sheep move
- *"It has been already confirmed by studies that dissuaders don't work!"*



4. *"WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE DAMAGE, DISCOVER WHO PROVOKES IT , IS A WASTE OF TIME AND RESOURCES"*

A. DAMAGES

Farmers activity should produce an income (in most cases businesses are family- run), therefore damages are the most important aspect, that exasperate the opposition toward wolf's presence, because they bring the income down and impoverish families. Furthermore they contribute to develop a powerlessness sense, as it is impossible avoid to pasture sheep, but it is also impossible to prevent attacks (*"All mayors must ask for the state of «Natural disaster»"*). First of all, for farms it implicates economical damages (direct and indirect), but also moral ones (*"We can't breed sheep to make the wolf play with them, compensation is not enough...it is true we live on money, but when you see your sheep killed, money is not enough anymore"*), of time (*"Time wasted to press charges and to dispose of carcasses"*), of psycho-physical health (*"What makes us angry is that we can't go to bed relaxed"; "I can't eat calm, because if I am not present, the wolf comes!"*).

Criticized also the management by the ASL (Local Health Authority), as the procedures result too variable (*"ASL-Veterinaries must issue a death certificate, but some of them don't do it, so we have to pay a private doctor"; "I have been asked for 100 Euros just for the call!"*) and in some cases they cause an additional expense (*"They make us cure hurt animals that die after few days!"*).

The first big complaint is against institutions, that in the past denied wolf's presence in the area and, still now, are not able to ascertain the predators' type (*"They often say damages are due to dogs, but it is really easy to distinguish a dog's damage from a wolf one. Only the wolf breaks sheep's neck"*).

Situation is then worsen by the fact that the attacks occur also in houses proximity, during the day. The seriousness perception is also caused by a percentage factor: if the wolves increase, sheep decrease (*"The number of farmers reduced of 2/3"*). The damages are divided between the few farms lasted. To increase the complexity of the case contribute also the presence of wild pigs on the territory.

An aspect that makes hard the monitoring of the problem is the facts unofficiality. Effectively, most farmers denounce the damages only when they are forced to (many items preyed), this because they incur many expenses in addition to the damage itself (*"Denunciations are not made because of the disposal costs."*)

B. COMPENSATION AND INSURANCE

One of the most problematic aspects of wolf's presence in this territory is the fact that the predators damages are not refunded outside the insurance system, and that the percentage of insured farmers is much reduced.

By the side of farmers we observed a general refuse toward the insurance, because they find unfair to pay an insurance to protect themselves from damages caused by others (*"Insurance should be paid by whom produces the damage, not by whom suffers it"*), and in some cases because they don't want to depend on state subsidies *"it would be a cost at*



the expense of the state". It is diffused between farmers a lack of knowledge of the insurance regulations, which brings some of them to report the fact that the system doesn't consider the refund for lost sheep or abortion, that the compensation is not compared to the type of preyed animal and that the insurance premium is entirely, or for the most part, at the expense of farmers.

But the most complicated aspect of the insurance, is related to the lack of refunds for induced damages, that farmers live as the "*second drama, after predation*". Between induced damages, farmers list abortion, injured animals, loss of milk production, animal stress growth, which makes harder to deal with them, mounting delay and loss of animals selected during years of work. Some consider an indirect damage also the cost increase to adopt prevention means, the time used to face wolf's presence, insurance premium and carcasses disposal expenses – too heavy for farmers who don't have a company cemetery available. Some complain that insurance refund is not adequate and it barely covers the carcasses disposal expenses. Others criticize the fact that the refunded percentage decreases according to previous damages. The proposal which emerges from all territories is that the refund should keep into consideration the indirect damages too. At the same time, it is important to notice that some farmers stress their will of practicing their profession autonomously: "*I don't want assistance*" ... "*I don't accept charity*".

PROPOSALS TO BE ANALYZED (divided for contents)

"We must develop solid answers!"

- ✓ *"We should be helped in selling our products, in valuing them...could be created cooperatives, but there is too much individualism between us!"*
- ✓ *"We must not do the war to environmental associations, but discuss with them, find a confrontation place"*
- ✓ *Even if Tuscany alone, maybe, can't do anything, we could begin with provincial or regional meetings to propose some solutions (culling, State safeguard law, ...)*

WOLF MANAGEMENT

- ✓ Do a wolf's survey at National and local level.
- ✓ Establish the minimal quantity necessary for wolves conservation Establish the suitable territories for wolves presence
- ✓ Immediately authorize selective culling to control the number of population and to bring it back to compatible levels with zoo-technics presence (directive Habitat)
- ✓ Give to farmers possibility of defense if the wolf enters the herd
- ✓ Wolves total removal
- ✓ Don't introduce wolves
- ✓ Keep the wolf in the Abruzzi
- ✓ Fence the wolf instead of sheep *All mayors must ask for the state of "Natural disaster"*
- ✓ Attribute to somebody the responsibilities and ask for damage refund



CARCASSES

- ✓ Denounce all damages, otherwise the real situation will never emerge from facts
- ✓ Company cemetery should be authorized without paying to obtain the permission
- ✓ Costs of veterinary survey shouldn't be at the expense of farmers
- ✓ Cemetery should be created at municipal level, without any cost for the farmer
- ✓ Arrange an authorized vehicle for carcasses transport
- ✓ Authorize bury
- ✓ Refund of transportation and disposal expenses and also of wasted time
- ✓ Refrigerated containers for mountain communities

COMPENSATION

- ✓ Restore the old compensation law for total damage (L. Reg. 72) without insurance and inclusive of induced damage (*"This will not solve the problems, but would help us to survive"*)
- ✓ Estimate the additional costs that wolf's presence causes to farmers and add them to CAP (*"Considering that we must live with the wolf, we should be refunded" ... "This refund could be estimated : around 30% more of sheep's value"*)
- ✓ Toscana region should refund 250 euro for each sheep after an ASL survey (the half if the sheep is old)
- ✓ Veterinary must understand if the sheep has been killed by a wolf/dog/hybrid.
- ✓ Refund direct and indirect damage at 100% (in this way we arrive at 500 Euros for animal)
- ✓ Same refund for different animals/ different refund for different animals

PREVENTION

- ✓ Fine who leaves the dog unattended (included hunters)
- ✓ Have a subsidy for sterilization and watch dogs nourishment
- ✓ Make available, in a continuing way, the instruments and the resources for prevention. Farmers can't wait the publication of an announcement if they immediately need to protect the sheep
- ✓ Fences contribution (given in advance)
- ✓ Ask to the Municipality to change the footpaths, so that people don't enter plots of land where the herd is protected by watch dogs
- ✓ Simplify the acquisition of authorizations to build up shelters and fences

HYBRIDS/STRAY ANIMALS

- ✓ Genetic analysis to identify hybrids captured, to be held before a possible release
- ✓ Teach to farmers the procedure to collect predator's swabs, in order to identify it
- ✓ Authorize hybrids and stray dogs culling
- ✓ Courses to train personnel for hybrids capture

✓ QUESTIONS



- ✓ What for is the wolf useful?
- ✓ Whose is the wolf... who answers for it?
- ✓ Who brought the wolf?
- ✓ When we see the wolf among sheep, what should we do?
- ✓ Is there any judgement about wolf killing?
- ✓ At European level, has been found a specific area where wolves should be brought?
Or they can simply stay everywhere?
- ✓ Why damages are certified as caused by “predators” and not by “wolves”?
- ✓ In other lands, how can farmers live with wolves?
- ✓ If the wolf is a EU protected species, why in France it can be hunted?
- ✓ What is the budget fixed for these projects (presentation)?
- ✓ Are hybrids protected? What is the sense of protecting them?
- ✓ Whose is hybrids' responsibility? Why it has not been done a decree to cull dogs/hybrids?
- ✓ A farmer of Carraia found some video-cameras in his plot, he wants to know who installed them.