

# Working with wolves – sheepdog puppies join new flock

February 6 2017, by Lulu Sloane

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Credit: Fauna & Flora International

Carpathian shepherd dogs have been reintroduced to the Zarand Landscape Corridor to guard livestock and help mitigate human-wildlife conflict in Romania.

These special puppies have been provided to shepherds in areas where sheep are frequently attacked by wolves. The puppies are Carpathian shepherd dogs, an ancient breed originating from the Carpathian Mountains and symbolic of traditional Romania. More importantly, these dogs are born with an innate instinct to safeguard the [livestock](#) they are put in charge of and are not afraid of predators such as wolves and bears.

The puppies have been provided through the European Commission's funded LIFE Connect Carpathians (LCC) project as part of Fauna & Flora International (FFI) and Asociatia Zarand's work to reduce the levels of conflict between livestock owners and Romania's [large carnivores](#). Eight puppies have been provided to shepherds across three Natura 2000 sites that form one of Europe's key ecological corridors for large carnivores, linking the Western Carpathians with the Southern Carpathians.

## The best dog for the job

Attacks on livestock by large carnivores are fairly common in the Zarand Landscape Corridor, which leads to conflict between shepherds and wildlife – particularly wolves.



Carpathian shepherd dogs have a fearless and protective nature. Credit: LIFE

Connect Carpathians (LCC). Credit: Fauna & Flora International

Traditionally, Carpathian shepherd dogs were used to help guard against these attacks – their fearless and protective nature and thick winter coats making them perfectly suited to the job in the harsh conditions of Romania's mountains.

Sadly, much of the knowledge and skills needed to correctly train the dogs have been lost over the years, while cross-breeding has led to dogs that are less-well adapted for livestock guarding.

The LCC team recognised that this was resulting in dogs that were ill-equipped to successfully prevent an attack, putting both dogs and livestock at risk. For this reason, the team began providing specialist training and support to local livestock owners to help them correctly handle and train these dogs.





Carpathian shepherd dogs have thick winter coats. Credit: Canine Efficiency

Shepherds are provided with both a dog and bitch of different parentage in order to help secure the sustainability of this traditional and effective livestock guarding measure along with the long-term survival of the breed.

It is hoped this project will reduce conflict between shepherds and wolves as well as bring back a disappearing dog breed and thus support the maintenance of biodiversity that makes this culturally rich landscape unique.

Provided by Fauna & Flora International

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