Study examines conflict between farmers and livestock predators

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A new *Journal of Wildlife Management* study conducted in South Africa has found that black-backed jackals, a similar species to coyotes and dingoes, prefer to eat livestock rather than similar-sized wild prey, which has important consequences for livestock husbandry and the management of predators.

Jackals are opportunistic predators, eating whatever prey is available, including rodents and insects. The study shows that farmers need to protect their livestock from jackals even when similarly sized wild prey (small antelopes) are available because of their preference for sheep and goats.

The issue of predation on livestock in South Africa is complex and contentious, and it has been challenging to determine how best to reduce livestock losses without adversely affecting wildlife welfare and biodiversity. These challenges mirror those throughout the world wherever predators and livestock coexist and affect livelihoods, food security, biodiversity conservation, and animal welfare.

"Our findings reflect what small-livestock farmers often tell us: that the jackal is a much more challenging threat than larger carnivores such as caracal or even leopard," said lead author and PhD candidate Marine Drouilly, of the Institute for Communities and Wildlife in Africa at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. "We showed that jackals prefer small-livestock over similar-sized wild prey. That being said, we do not know if jackals would still prefer livestock over other prey species such

as mice."

More information: Marine Drouilly et al, Dietary niche relationships among predators on farmland and a protected area, *The Journal of Wildlife Management* (2017). DOI: 10.1002/jwmg.21407

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