

Human-Wildlife Interface

Guidelines for Local Self Governments



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About the Guidelines

The goal of this guideline is to inform the local self-government representatives, farmers and rural residents about the state regulations on the management of wild animal attack risks, responsible state structures and existing response mechanisms. The guidelines will support all interested parties in planning and implementing preventive measures against wild-animal attacks and facilitate the effective performance of municipal working groups to reduce the risk of disasters in Ajara Autonomous Republic.

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Introduction

Wildlife conservation and management is associated not with the biopopulation of animals, but with the management of the people who have contact with them. Humans will co-exist with wolves and bears only if they are willing to share the landscape and consider the potential and real risks regarding the security of their property.

The present document is designed for self-government representatives to support and ensure peaceful interaction between rural inhabitants and wild animals.

In order to protect the residents and their agricultural activities, from wild animals and to maintain local biodiversity in the form of wild animals (most of which are incorporated into the “Red Book” of Georgia and protected by International Law), it is necessary to develop specific tools and carry out special measures at self-government level. Legal documents regulating the animal world, including the protection and monitoring of biodiversity are: *“Law of Georgia on Animals”, “Georgian Law of Red List and Red Book”, “Administrative Offences Code of Georgia”, “Criminal Code of Georgia”, “Organic Law of Georgia Local Self-Government Code” (see annex).*

Institutions responsible for the protection of wildlife

1. Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia and its structural units are responsible for the monitoring of animals and the use of animal resources:

- ✓ Biodiversity and Forest Policy Department – is responsible for monitoring animals, collecting/processing data and determining the use of animal species and the number of resources available;
- ✓ National Environment Agency is in charge of issuing licenses for animal resources;

Environmental Protection and Supervision Department monitors the use of animal resources;

- ✓ In 2014, Hot Line 153 started functioning under the supervision of the Environment Protection Department. It is a 24-hour telephone line based on modern technologies and provides timely information on violations of environmental legislation, recommendations and consultation on environmental issues (including wild animal attacks).

2. Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia

In the area of responsibility with regard to regulating process of wild animals, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia coordinates with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs to prevent epidemics or/and the spread of disease in humans, domestic and wild animals. The above mentioned threat is discovered based on diagnostic studies of animal zoonotic and zoonanthroponic diseases. The removal of infected animals is the responsibility of the National Food Agency, having authorized representatives in all operating zones.

3. Local Self-government

At the local level, cooperation regarding the regulation of wild animals is based entirely on the *Local Self-Government Code*” (*chapter 17, article 1*) according to which the representatives of self-government – Municipality Assembly (“Sakrebulo”) and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection reach agreement on regulating activities regarding wild animals. The agreement envisages measures and actions planned to be implemented by the Municipality and the responsibility for the supervision is assumed by the Department of Environmental Protection.

The local self-government is responsible for creating local mechanisms (for example, special working groups (see details below) to ensure timely and effective implementation of delegated rights and obligations set forth in the agreement.

Competencies and local mechanisms of the self-government

The Local Self-Government Code of Georgia allows municipalities to carry out the measures relevant to the local conditions.

Currently, the removal of wild animals in Georgia is conducted in accordance with the agreement signed between the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection and the Municipality, where wild-animal attacks and associated diseases are reported.

If a wild-animal attack or associated disease poses a real threat to the local population and their agricultural activities, the municipality in charge will report to the Ministry to undertake immediate responsive measures, which in case of necessity will send an expert or a group of experts on site. After considering the report made by the Municipality or/and conclusion drawn by an expert or a group of experts, the Ministry prepares a draft agreement based on the article 17 under the *Law of Georgia Local Self-Government Code*. The agreement shall be agreed and signed between the Ministry and the Municipality. Based on the report to the Ministry, the Government of Georgia makes a final decision on delegating the rights and responsibilities between the Ministry and Municipality.

Implementation of regulatory measures is controlled by the Department of Environmental Protection Supervision by drawing up a respective document/report.

- It is not permitted to sell or transfer any part of the removed wild animal under the regulations, except in cases where the wild animals are given to scientific institutions, zoo or animal shelters on the basis of a decision made by the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia. Otherwise, the wild animal shall be destroyed.
 - The removal of infected animals is carried out in accordance with Resolution #433 of the Government of Georgia (December 31, 2013) which establishes technical guidelines setting out special rules for the removal and destruction of livestock raw material and products infected by epizootic, zoonotic and zoonanthroponotic diseases and which are dangerous for human

consumption, as well as the removal and destruction of all kinds of chemical and pharmaceutical drugs.

According to the above mentioned guideline, removed live animals are killed and incinerated. The incineration site should be thoroughly disinfected and any dead animal remains should be well buried.

It is necessary for self-government representatives to determine and reveal the so called “hot spots” of wild-animal attacks and carry out prediction works, collect data and evaluate the respective impact.

Mentioned activities imply:

- ✓ Developing and implementing a monitoring system of wild animals (possible to widely use camera/photo trapping).
- ✓ Working out and implementing measures for improving food supply for wild animals in the wild (for example, reproduction programs of wild hoofed animals, protection and restoration and etc. of separate, wild and fruit giving plants)
- ✓ Permanent control of the situation, creation and implementation of a unified electronic database.

Municipal response mechanisms against wild animal attack

It is preferable to establish a rapid response group of trained personnel in the municipality, which shall consist of a representative of the Ministry of Environment (protected territory ranger, forest ranger or representative of environmental supervision inspection), representatives of the Municipality, Ministry of Agriculture and several people from the community.

The local population shall have the opportunity to give attack-related information directly to the group. The group will ensure a rapid and effective response, a description of the situation and insertion of information into the database; identification of the problem animal and if necessary, gain permission for its removal.

Approved model: Disaster risk reduction and Cattle disease control municipal groups

Working groups aimed at reducing disaster risks and controlling animal disease, established in Ajara Municipalities in 2014, control human and wild animal interaction at a local level. The main objectives of the working groups¹ are: to collect and disseminate information on animal diseases on the territory of the municipality; provide effective epizootic quarantine; ensure pasture management and purposeful use of agricultural lands; register and calculate damage caused by wild animals and cattle diseases and support the planning and implementation of appropriate preventive measures. Working groups coordinate with the national and local governmental institutions responsible for the management of disaster risk, Environmental Protection Agency and National Food Agency among them.

The composition of the working group is determined by the Municipality Gamgebeli who selects and appoints a coordinator responsible for disaster reduction risk. A special hot-line is operating in the municipalities - a free

¹The mentioned groups were established in the municipalities of Adjara and Kvemo Kartli regions in 2012-2014 with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and assistance of Alliances Lesser Caucasus Program (ALCP) under the Mercy Corps, Georgia .

telephone line connecting the rural population with the municipality and providing information on animal diseases, wild-animal attacks and natural disasters.

The municipal working groups keep a database and have special registration forms. Based on this database and respective statistics a municipality can plan preventive measures.

The abovementioned model of the municipal working groups is an effective tool for reducing disaster risks at the local self-government level which allows the local government to take risk-reduction measures to ensure the economic and social welfare of the population.

This model can be replicated in other municipalities of Georgia where such a system has not yet been established, as the databases maintained by the groups will allow the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia to create an integrated national system for the collection, storage, exchange and analysis of wild-animal attacks and diseases.

The same groups may be responsible for the human and wild-animal interaction related study of modern experiences and best practices, technologies, mechanisms and testing in the target area. In case of positive results of testing, special programs are to be implemented to introduce these methods.

Mechanisms for mitigating damage

Livestock and harvest insurance

Harvest and livestock insurance is an efficient and innovative tool to reduce humans and wildlife interface, but this type of insurance is still experimental as it is not well organized and the population does not have full information about it. This type of insurance covers the harvest or livestock against wild-animal attack. To facilitate the establishment of this insurance system, the central government or local municipality can be involved at the initial phase as the co-financer, which will reduce the amount of money to be paid by the farmer to the insurer.

Veterinary system

Better access to veterinary services leads to reducing the loss of livestock through prevention of disease spread. A well-organized veterinary system will have benefits for both domestic cattle and wild animals, where the spread of rabies and other infectious diseases are reduced.

Conservation education

Educational activities at different levels, i.e. schools, farmers, different social and economic groups aimed at sharing information about modern methods and expertise and innovative technologies on interaction between humans and wildlife, strengthening of ad-hoc capabilities to reduce interaction and to increase public awareness.

Providing information to farmers about practical preventive methods will facilitate their resilience and introduction of new technologies in terms of protecting their farms.

The introduction of these mechanisms will cause a change of behavior in the local population over time; reduce the risk, improve local inhabitants' lives and reduce vulnerability from attacks.

Compensation system

Wild animal attacks can cause significant economic damage to the farmer and paying compensation is one method of mitigating this damage.

For the introduction of the compensation system, funds can be raised from the licenses or duties for using natural resources (hunting, preparing timber etc.), incomes from protected territories or donors. The abovementioned mechanisms can be used together, in parallel, or as part of other activities.

Preventive measures against wild animals

Natural and Artificial Barriers

Barriers are a common way to protect domestic animals or harvest from wild animals. Various materials are used for the construction of barriers: timber branches, stone, wire nets, etc.

Fladry or Flag Barrier

In order to protect domestic animals from the wolves, the eastern European countries and Russia widely use a flag barrier. The barrier is of simple design and consists of swaying flags hung on a rope; the distance between the flags is 0.5 meters (see picture 1). Studies have shown that wolves are afraid of such barriers and they do not cross the barrier. Such barriers protect domestic cattle. It is easy to arrange them in the livestock sleeping area; however, it's difficult to use them in pastures. It should be noted that a bear is not afraid of this barrier. Domestic animals simply do not care about barriers and easily live with them. Typically, the flag barrier is used in combination with other types of barriers.



Picture 1 Flag Barrier

Electric fencing

Nowadays, electric fencing is considered as the most efficient preventive means, which successfully works on both small livestock and cattle, for example brown bear and wolf. The domestic cattle usually avoid approaching it and this ensures the safety of the livestock. The electric fencing is used to protect livestock sleeping areas as well as to fence around pasture areas. It can also effectively protect bee hives and agricultural lands (see picture 2). The advantage of the electric fencing is its long-term operation, while its initial installation cost could be seen as a disadvantage (prices are subject to change depending on the technical characteristics, from 1000 to 2500 GEL per hectare), but it is considered as cost-effective in terms of its long term durability and simple operation.

In order to prevent wild-animal attacks, it is effective to use night lightening in combination with electric fencing equipment/device. Both systems are solar powered and therefore, they do not require additional electricity, which is a cost-saving for farmers.



Picture 2: Solar-powered electric fencing

Light and sound device

Nowadays, fully programmed light and sound devices are widely used to frighten or deter wild animals and prevent their attacks. They can be installed on a fence or a tree in pasture lands (see picture 3). The device can flash sudden lights or emit high-frequency sound waves, such as a shooting sound

To introduce the above-presented technologies, specialized programs can be implemented that will ensure establishing contact with system producers, importing them to the country and selling them to farmers at preferential rates and / or on installment.



Picture 3: fully programmed light and sound device

Herding by guarding

Active herding of livestock by a shepherd is an effective way to protect pastures from the wild-animal attacks. Dogs can be used as guards (shepherds) during herding. This is a good strategy and reduces the risk of wild animal attacks; however, there are some cases when dogs are not effective enough to prevent cattle from bear and wolf attacks. There are mostly mixed breed dogs in the villages of Ajara and none of them were trained as shepherds. In order to provide effective herding, it is important to have a special breed of dog such as Caucasian or Georgian Shepherd ("Nagazi") which has undergone a special training program.

The population of Ajara rarely use herding dogs. Moreover, they do not consider dogs as an effective means of reducing risk from wild animals. Consequently, it is necessary to implement different programs aimed at raising awareness of and providing proper information on the effectiveness of the herding dogs in Ajaran population.

Promote the introduction of intensive farming systems

Facilitating the transition from the extensive system of local farming management to an intensive system means to set up closed farms in which the practice of putting out livestock to the pasture is not used. The use of the abovementioned practice will make it possible to maintain the spread of wild animals and reduce the risk of attacks on livestock.

Waste management system restricting access of wild animals to the waste

A good system of waste management restricts wild animal access to "simple" food, which limits their mass reproduction. Accessible waste is "attractive" to wild animals and attracts them to landfills and human settlements. The best example of this is the reproduction of jackals over the last 10 years and the increase of their concentration in the vicinity of landfills.

Developing hunting tourism

In the long term, when the number of certain wild species is sufficiently increased, it is recommended to develop hunting tourism. Neighboring Turkey has good experience in this regard: each year the number of species is determined and the number of individuals (quota) that should be removed from the wild is defined, a part of quota is put up for auction attended by interested tourism companies; Part of the quota is retained by the community and it can be sold and the income can be used for the development of the community.

Annexes

Annex 1. Law of Georgia on Animals²

Article 2. Definition of main terms

1. Animal World – unity of all wild animal species which permanently or temporarily inhabit the territory of Georgia, its territorial waters, continental shelf and special economic zone and are in a state of natural liberty.

Article 25. Types of use of world animal objects:

1. Use of wildlife objects include:

- a) Hunting;
 - b) Fishing including invertebrates and marine mammals;
 - c) Obtaining wildlife objects that do not belong to hunting or fishing objects;
 - d) Using of beneficial properties (soil producers, plant fertilizers, bio-filters and others) and products of wildlife objects (honey, wax, etc.);
 - e) Scientific research of animals and different uses of objects for cultural – educational, recreational and aesthetic purposes, which may include the removal of wild animals or not;
 - f) Obtaining wild animals for the purpose of reproduction in storage, captivity or semi-free conditions;
 - g) Creating of zoological collections.
2. Legislation of Georgia may also provide other options for using wildlife objects.
3. The use of wildlife could involve the removal of wildlife objects from their habitat or not.
4. The objects of wildlife are used in accordance with the rules established by this Law only on the base of the relevant license except for the cases referred to Article 26 under this Law.

²<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/33352>

Article 26. Common use of wildlife objects

1. The citizens of Georgia are entitled to use wildlife objects in the form of common use to satisfy personal consumption, aesthetic, recreational, health and other wants and needs.
2. Common usage is carried out without harming wildlife and removing its objects from the natural environment (except for the cases referred to in Article 21, paragraphs 6 and Article 30, paragraph 3 of this Law). Such as: the use of the objects of the animal world for scientific, cultural, educational, recreational, aesthetic, amateur collections, restoration and veterinary purposes.
3. While using wildlife objects for the common purposes, it is not permitted to destroy wild animals, destroy their shelters and dens (lair, houses, bird nests, etc.) or cause negative impact on reproduction conditions.
4. The use of wildlife objects in general is free of charge and does not require any license.

Article 28. Hunting

1. Hunting is a form of obtaining wild animals for special use, to satisfy material, recreational and other demands of physical and legal persons.
2. Hunting can be done according to the legislation of Georgia, on the basis of permits for amateur and sport hunting.
3. A series of rules determining wildlife objects due to their status, quantity, traditional use, quality and received product which belong to the hunting objects are set out by the "Rules for the identification a list of wildlife objects belonging to the hunting objects" and developed and approved by the Ministry. A list of wildlife objects which belong to the hunting objects because of their status, quantity, benefit traditions, received product and quality is determined by the decree issued by the Ministry on "Wildlife objects belonging to the hunting objects".
4. According to the Legislation of Georgia, hunting is allowed only in specially designated territories - hunting farms. The establishment of hunting farms is only possible in the following categories of protected areas: prohibited, protected landscapes and areas of multilateral use. Hunting migratory birds is also possible outside the hunting farms.
5. Hunting is banned with any kind of explosives and other means which causes suffering to animals.

Annex 2. Law of Georgia on “Red List and Red Book of Georgia”³

Article 2. The Subject of the Law

This law regulates legal relations in the field of development of the “Red List” and the “Red Book”, protection and use of endangered species (hereinafter referred to as a field of "Red List" and "Red Book" of Georgia) apart from the International Trade Law issues on endangered species of flora and fauna that is regulated within the jurisdiction of Georgia by the “Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora” signed in Washington, D.C. on 3 March 1973.

Article 10. Basic requirements for endangered species

1. Endangered species are protected by the state.
2. All actions are prohibited including hunting, fishing, extraction (removal from the natural environment), cutting and mowing except as prescribed in exceptional cases by this law, the “Law of Georgia on Wildlife” and other legislative documents and sub-laws of Georgia that may result in the reduction of the number of endangered species and deterioration of their habitat environment and living conditions.

Annex 3. Administrative Offences Code of Georgia⁴

Article 86. Violation of hunting and fishing rules as well as violation of rules connected with the use of wildlife objects for different purposes.

12. Violation of hunting rules during hunting of a species belonging to hunting objects – is subject to mandatory penalties from 100 GEL to 500 GEL, which may include confiscation of the obtained object and hunting firearm/equipment.

13. Violation of hunting rules (except as provided in paragraph 12 under the present Article) is subject to penalties from 500 GEL to 700 Gel, and may include the confiscation of the obtained object and hunting firearm/equipment.

14. Violation of rules on using wildlife objects for other purposes (except as stipulated in the paragraphs 12, 13, and 15 of the present Article) –will result

³<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/12514>

⁴<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/28216>

in penalties from 800 GEL to 1000 GEL, and may include confiscation of the obtained object and hunting firearm/equipment.

15. Hunting with firearm, any other means or method forbidden by the Law (except as provided in paragraphs 12,13 and 14 under the present Article) will be subject to penalties – from 1000 GEL 2000 GEL, and may include the confiscation of the obtained object and hunting firearm/equipment or without.

Comment:

1. Confiscation of hunting firearms shall be an additional penalty imposed by paragraphs 12 and 14 of this article only if the person hunting does not have a document issued by the Legal Entity of Public Law - Service Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, confirming the right to keep and bear a hunting firearm under the Georgian Law on Guns.

2. In cases as provided in paragraphs 12 and 14 of this Article, if the person hunting does not have the document defined in the first part of the above comment or the hunting is carried out with a prohibited hunting rifle, the violator will face a temporary confiscation of the hunting rifle before legal investigation, and the return or state ownership shall be based on the legal decision made by the authorized body /officer having the authority to review the case.

3. In accordance with the provisions prescribed in this Article, a person shall be deprived of the wildlife object or objects and if obtaining them does not give any harmful effect on environment, the administrative offenses authority/ empowered person is entitled to distribute all obtained wildlife object/objects immediately free of charge for social purposes; but if the wildlife object /objects has shows signs of being inedible (the usual color is changed and / or is inadequate for healthy food with unpleasant smell) – it/they shall be promptly destroyed through burial or burning in an incinerator.

4. In the case referred to as paragraph 3 of this comment, if the confiscated wildlife object (objects) is given back to the person in accordance to the decision made by the administrative offences authority/empowered person, this person is entitled to demand compensation for the damage caused to him as a result of the deprivation of the wildlife object/objects by the legislation of Georgia.

Annex 4. Criminal code of Georgia

Article 301. Illegal hunting

1. Hunting without appropriate permission or in a prohibited area or at a prohibited time or with a prohibited gun or means causing significant damage - shall be punished by penalty or corrective labour for up to two years or deprivation of liberty up to one year, deprivation of the right to occupy a position and pursue a particular activity for up to three years (28.04.2006. N2937).

2. Hunting in the state reserves or other protected areas where hunting is completely prohibited, or using the means of mechanical transport or mass destruction, or hunting for wild birds incorporated in the "Red List" of Georgia or being in helpless conditions, also during an emergency ecological condition or ecological disaster zone, is punishable by fines or corrective labour for up to two years or imprisonment for up to three years, deprivation of the right to occupy a position and pursue a particular activity for up to three years.

Annex 5. Local self-government code⁵

The document determines the legal basis and requirements of local self-government bodies, their rights, the manner of formation and rules of their activities, their finances and property, relations with citizens, state authorities and legal and private entities as well as implementing rules for the state supervision and direct state governance over the activities conducted by the local self-government bodies.

Article 17. Regulates the terms and conditions for the delegation of powers

1. State body or Autonomous Republic authority can transfer state or Autonomous Republic's authorities and rights to the municipalities in cases where the implementation of which is more effective at a local level.

2. Delegation of power to the municipality by the state body or Autonomous Republic authority may be carried out according to the legislative document of Georgia or the law of the Autonomous Republic as well as by agreement made on the basis of the Legislation of Georgia or Autonomous Republic through the transfer of appropriate material and financial resources.

⁵<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2244429>

3. Decision on the delegation of the power by the State Government/ Autonomous Republic Authority as per agreement is made by the Government of Georgia/Autonomous Republic. A relevant agreement is signed between the Municipality and the Ministry in accordance with the requirements provided as prescribed in paragraphs 2 and 4 of this Article. The agreement is signed by the municipality governor/mayor and is approved by the majority of the City Assembly (“Sakrebulo”).
4. The municipality is empowered to carry out the delegated rights and responsibilities under the legislation of Georgia adjusted to local conditions.
5. When delegating power, the same document shall define the Ministry, which will be in charge of providing state supervision over the implementation of the delegated power.

Annex 6. Decree of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia

On approval of the regulations “setting out the rules for the state registration of wildlife and its objects, drawing up state cadastre of animals, determining the list of groups of species that are subject to state registration and state cadastre, as well as presenting data required for registering and drawing up cadastral documents”⁶.

Article 5. Coordination of activities carried out by the Georgian authorities to provide state cadastre of wildlife and state registration of animals.

1. Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia (hereinafter referred to as –Ministry) is responsible for the coordination of state cadastre of wildlife and state registration of animals.
2. Primary information on state registration (monitoring) and state cadastre is collected by the Ministry through its territorial entities.
3. State Department of Forestry obtains and collects the primary information on the lands of the state forestry fund; protected areas are the responsibility of the Department of Reserves and Hunting Farms, information on territory of hunting farm is obtained by the Administration of Hunting Farms; All the collected information is submitted to the regional body under the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia.
4. Upon the permission issued by the Ministry, a legal entity can obtain and collect primary information on state registration (monitoring) and state

⁶<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/53800>

cadastre. Selection of a legal entity responsible for obtaining and analyzing information for state registration (monitoring) and state cadastre is made by the Ministry through the rules of contest.

Annex 7. Decree of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia

“On Approval of the regulations on the wildlife objects, obtaining them according to the species, terms and list of permitted weapons and equipment”⁷.

Annex 8. Decree of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia “On Approval of the regulations on the protection of wild animals”⁸

Article 1. Purpose of the provision

The purpose of the present provision is to regulate the basic relations connected with the provision of sanitary-epidemiological security, strengthening the population’s life and health, prevention of disease outbreaks among agricultural and other domestic animals, avoidance of damage to agricultural activities and regulation of the number of wild animals.

Article 2. The methods allowed for the regulation of wild animals

1. The regulation of wild animals must be carried out through methods which exclude harm to other species of wild animals and ensure maintenance of the habitats for wild animals.
2. Arbitrary regulation of wild animals is not permitted.

Article 3. Wildlife rules and regulations to protect population’s health and life and avoid damage to the agricultural activity in case a wild animal poses a threat to a human’s life and health and damages their property and it is impossible to avoid this threat, animal removal takes place immediately at the moment of the attack (regulation measure) and does not require any preliminary consent by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia.

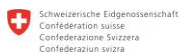
⁷<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2166315>

⁸<https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/76510>

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