Livestock farming
How to successfully co-exist with predators

Torino, 6 novembre 2013
Large Carnivores in the Alps today...

About 50 bears in the Alps (plus Slovenian alps) Core areas in Western Trentino and South east Slovenia Dispersal area (only young males) in central-eastern Alps Increasing in numbers but slowly in range

Western and Eastern sub-population of Wolf in the Alps are again in contact after 200 years. Packs just in very Western and Eastern alps, single animals all over the alpine range. Increasing in range but slowly in numbers

and Lynx, Jackal...
Is there still space for predators in the Alps?

Compared with last century

- Forest habitats
- Preys
- Humans distribution
- Protected areas and legislation

Road traffic
Tourism

Media role is crucial
Alps today are suitable for large carnivores, more then 150 years ago.

Habitat and food availability are optimal.

The main limiting factor is the conflict with humans. The drivers for cohabitation are culture, politicians and Media.

The evident part of conflict are damages (real or only perceived) and the presumed dangerousness.
Bear and wolf conservation = cohabitation with humans and conflict decreasing

1) Concrete prevention measures and damage refunding

2) Prevention strategy for confident animals management

3) Good and effective communication and information
Damages

Sheeps and goats (rarely other domestic species) – BEAR AND WOLF

Honey and bees - BEAR

Other cultivations (corn, grape, fruit, potatoes, hay...) – BEAR

Rural building (fences, hens houses, compost...) – WOLF AND BEAR

Organic wasteboxes – mainly BEAR
Damages depend from

- Habitat
- Breeding strategy
- Domestic species
- Dimension
- Year
- Season
- Number of predators
- Availability of alternative wild species
How many damages?

Piemonte – about 200 animals/year in last 10 years

Trentino – about 100,000 euros/year in last 5 years

Lombardia – about 5,000 euros/year in last 5 years

M13 (bear killed in Switzerland) - less then 10,000 Chf in Switzerland + 4 sheeps and 4 beehives in Italy

Damages from LC’s are an small portion of damages from wildlife

A non-significant part of mountain breeding problems but... they always are very visible in media!
A very important assumption...

Bears and wolves don’t need food coming from human activities!!!
Danni indennizzati dal 1990 al 2012

In 2012 73% of damages from 4 bears (on 45)
L’orso è tornato e ha ucciso ancora
È scattata subito la «caccia», ma senza risultato. Ha preso di mira due greggi diverse

Lamon. Ieri pomeriggio ennesima razzia di Fritz. Ha sbranato altre due pecore dopo le tre di mercoledì scorso.

media responsibility

cm 37
Sbranate 5 pecore
L’orso JJ5 svena sulle Orobie

Valgoglio, avrebbe assalito un gregge a quota 1.600
Oggi la polizia provinciale verificherà le tracce lasciate

Inequivocabili le tracce dell’orso sulla neve ad Arvedio e le carcase di 10 ovini a Valgoglio

Orme e pecore sbranate: si, è proprio «JJ5»

«Troppi vicini quell’orso
Adesso portiamolo via»

«JJ5» avvistato a Valgoglio. Il sindaco: si intervenga
Grassi (Parco delle Orobie): si valuterà il trasferimento

VALGOGLIO: «Se poi si avverterà una situazione di grave pericolo per la popolazione, la scuola sarà chiusa.»

Il sindaco di Valgoglio, Fabio Rossati, ha dichiarato: «L’orso è stato avvistato nel parco delle Orobie, in prossimità di una zona abitata.»

IL SINDACO: «Siamo preoccupati per la sicurezza della popolazione.»

Grassi, direttore del Parco delle Orobie, ha aggiunto: «Siamo pronti a intervenire in qualsiasi momento.»

«Ho visto JJ5 a spasso sulla neve»

L’incontro sui monti sopra Valgoglio ha ucciso altre pecore
Possible role of EU funds for agriculture

- **Good practices** in breeding and agriculture

- **Direct measures**: refunding and damage prevention
Good practices

*Nocturnal recovery* of domestic animals – difficult to stimulate...

**Garding of animals during the day and the night**
Animal garding (in Italy) is in theory compulsory for law.

*How to pay something compulsory...?*
Good practices

**Shelter sharing** - Shepherds put sheeps in the same recovery for the night, in case of predators
Strongly reduction of predation, sharing of fences, dogs, ecc.

- Pay attention to coherence between different measures (extensive pastures)!!!

- This measure doesn’t work with nomadic shepherds
Good practices

No-harvest cultivation management

In the edge of the field. Ex: rows of apple trees

NB: Bear doesn’t need our apples, but this can be a strategy for conflict reduction, improving an existing food source

Advantage even for other species, including preys for bear and wolf (ungulates)
Good practices

Damages refunding

It’s the most important measure

Without a complete and fast refunding every cohabitation strategy is not effective

The situation is significantly improved in last 5 years in the Alps. Several different situation in different areas.

These measures must be financed with rural development or other tools
Direct damage prevention measures

Electric fences

They currently are the best measure both for damage reduction, both for communication
First attempts - physical barriers are ineffective!
... even in case of beautiful buildings
physical barriers are ineffective!

In case of bear overall...
Prevention measures – what are we talking about?
**Regular fences** ➔ In order to avoid that sheeps go towards predators

They are useful, but:

➔ They are not a real barrier (a low investment for a big prize by predators)

➔ Possible *surplus killing*

Sometimes regular fences are electrified with classic methods

But a real effective electric fence has to be specifically designed
Electric fence ⇒ in order to avoid that predator enter in the herd

High voltage, low amperage
Proportioned for specific cases: species of predator (bear or wolf), domestic species or beehives, dimension, humidity, ecc.
Powerful battery and about 2,8 Joules (regular one for cows is 0,3)
Fences with wires, strings or net. Rarely electricity is available in the field, usually you need a solar panel.
Better situation: double fence
IN CASE OF EMERGENCY ➔ SMARTFENCE less powerful but very easy to assemble

A fast reaction in case of damage is crucial for bears and wolves “education”
Good management of fences

A bad-working fence is a own-goal from a communication point of view

in front of public opinion

...even in front of the predator!
Electric fences are a concrete measure.

In case of beehives the predation rate decreases of 95%.

In case of breeding, there are many factors and a real statistics is not so simple.
Total: 720 (359 breeders, 476 honey prod.)
Predators are very intelligent animals!
In case of wolf and bear
Problems and constraints

- Fences are sometimes too heavy for nomadic sheperds, new experimentations are welcome...

- Some problems in stip areas and in case of stone and dry soil

- Some shepards don’t want to use fences even in case of payment from psr
Good practices – Guardian dogs

Guardian dogs are different from shepard dogs, similar to mastino abruzzeze. Not traditional in the Alps

If correctly managed they are extremely effective against carnivores

But: good quality dogs, well trained, management is expensive, they can be problematic with tourists and sometimes they can act as a predator themselves
Problem - 1

Most of cohabitation problems come from **non-professional** shepard or hobbistic honey producers

They may have some difficulty to use the rural development measures, **but**...

... they know the name of every sheep and every local journalists!!!

*Sondrio province case: the average dimension of herds is 15 sheep!!!*

*In this situation is extremely hard to work on damage prevention*
Problem - 2

EU stimulates different measures for urban agriculture: gardens, zero km food and so on...

In mountain areas the presence of agriculture around cities can be a problem and can be stimulate confident predators. The conflict may increase.
Conclusions

Rural development can be one of the tools for a good LC’s management in the Alps

But they are not enough.
We need knowledge, coordinated actions in public bodies, international cooperation, transparency in information, responsible media, strong and independent ngo’s

Finally, we need some **tolerance** from everybody