

Behavioral Evaluation of herds protection dogs in Abruzzo Molise (it)

Study summary

The facts on the field about 73 dogs evaluated and belonging to 12 different farms is this:

The Abruzzes sheepdog

- All dogs stay to the herd.
- All dogs notice changes in attitude and undertake decided actions.
- No dog was aggressive after gestural tests.
- 73% of the visited herds are composed of sheep.
- All dogs are very medium size
- On all herds we notice attack every 10 years.



Summary

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This Abruzzo Shepherd keep a close watch on the other part of his herd.

Photo Mario Massucci

The real breed name is Maremma Abruzzes. By convenience and realism, it is called shepherds of Abruzzo by the users.

Farms studied at trips in 2013, 2014 and 2015

Molise and Abruzzo area are two traditionally users of guard dogs.

For twenty years in the Alps, the return of wolves brought many problems such as the protection of herds and especially cohabitation between tourists and dogs. It therefore seemed essential to carry out a study tour in Abruzzo and Molise regions of Italy where we come the wolves, but also in terms of reference countries to protect herds.

In these regions, the dog is part of the local cultural heritage and there is no funding for prevention measures. The purpose of the study is to understand and to evaluate the functioning of the overall “dogs/cattl /tourists” and to adapt the French model. This study is based on observation of the dog pack behavior towards herd and the environment of the pasture.

- Through CSAPT test (Certificat de Sociabilité et d’Aptitude à la protection des Troupeaux) (Certificate of Sociability and Ability to protect Herds)
- By detailed observation of the morphology.
- The Pastor’Alpes, The cultural association Rives strongly contributed to the implementation and development of the CASPT test. Its purpose is to select dogs for protection and herd and capable of discernment towards tourists.
- The project is also running in cooperation with the Italian participants of the previous "weeks of transhumance" in Rives and coordinated by Pastor'Alpes association. Also participate Switzerland Protection Dogs Association and the Austrian Union Sheep Goat.

Concerning the two Italian regions visited: (Mainly Abruzzo)

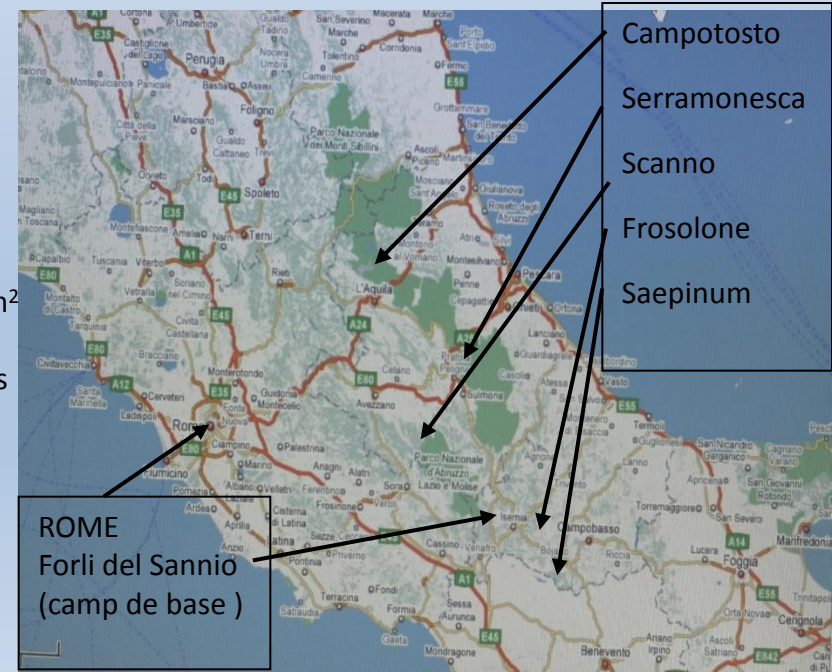
In march 2010: Population 339 317 residents , 124 res./sqkm , surface 10 763 km²

In 2014: 6 million tourists

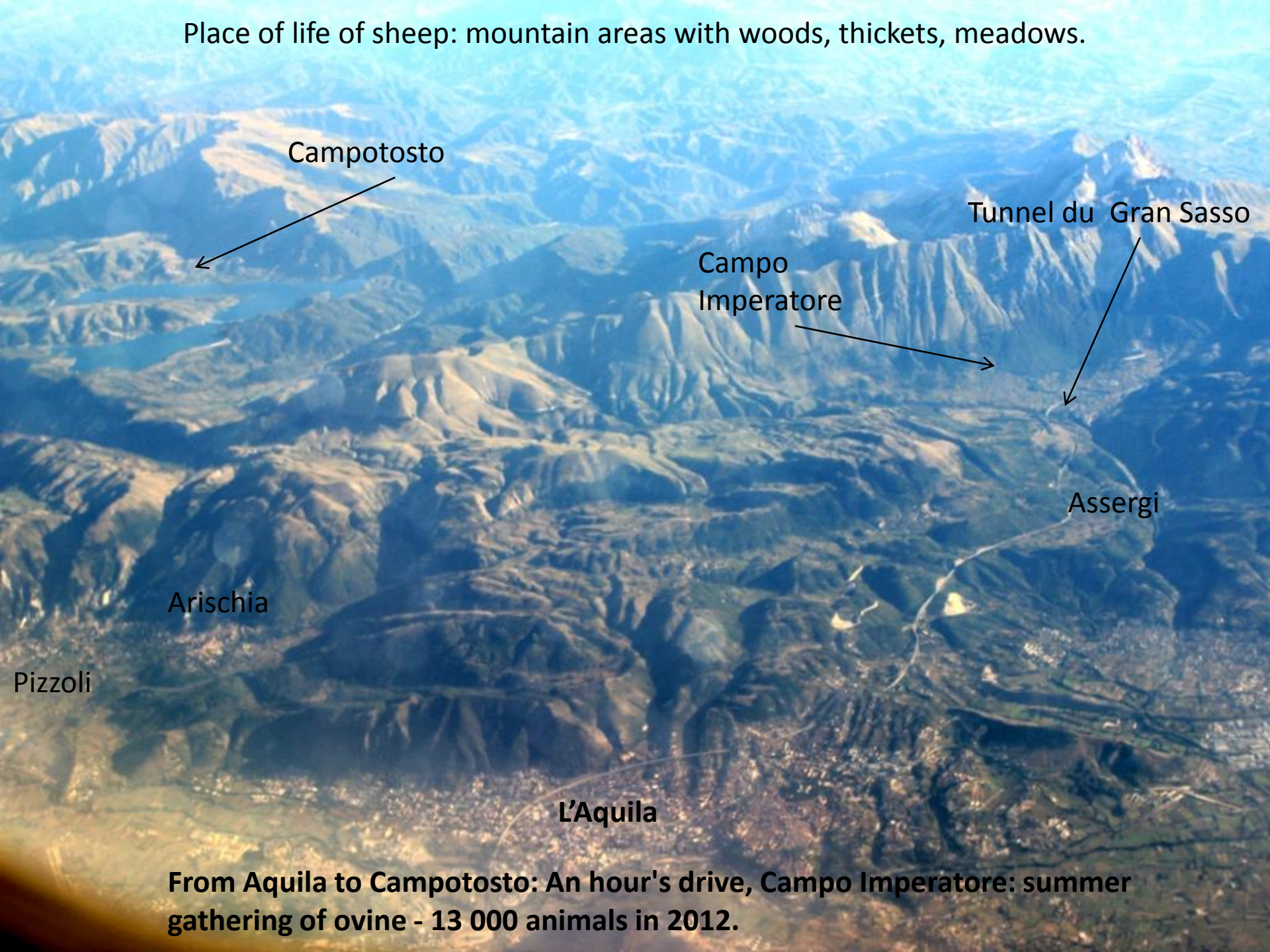
Simone Angelucci, veterinarian at “ Park Majella” confirm about a hundred wolves and at least 6 bears on 750 square kilometers

In Abruzzo there are 1326 active farms elevating ovine animals.

89.658 ovine animals were censused in 2010. Here no union or other ovine organization dedicated to pastoralism as in France.



Place of life of sheep: mountain areas with woods, thickets, meadows.



Campotosto

Tunnel du Gran Sasso

Campo
Imperatore

Assergi

Arischia

Pizzoli

L'Aquila

From Aquila to Campotosto: An hour's drive, Campo Imperatore: summer gathering of ovine - 13 000 animals in 2012.

Mirko di Francesco's farm to Serramonacesca –
Majella mountain. Tests 12/10/2013 and
16/10/2014



**The impassive dogs, observe
cyclists moves.**



Mirko di Francesco's farm.



Experience Dr. Ueli Pfister

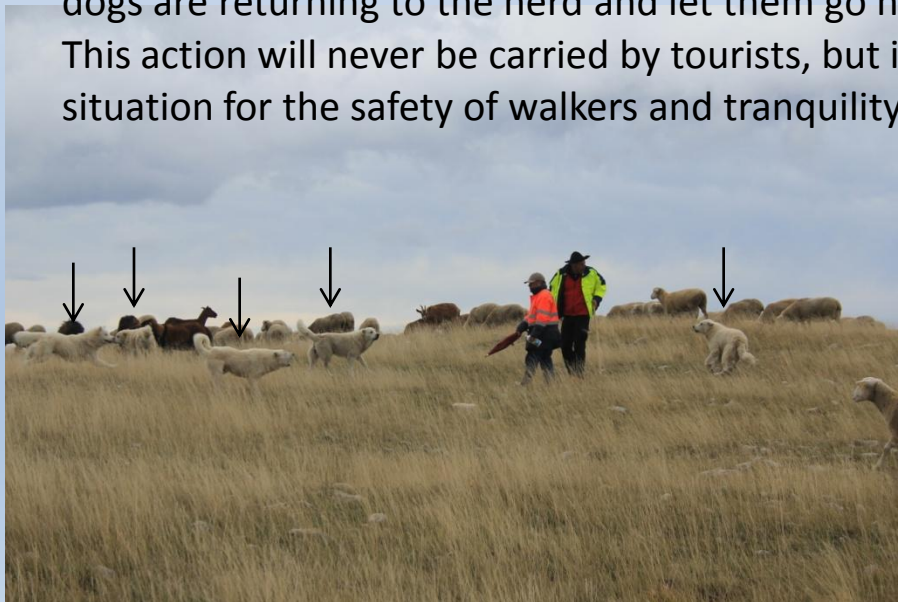
First manipulation of rattle outside the flock with 1 dog: no reaction.

Second manipulation of rattle: the dogs are reactive.

Third handling rattle, insisting strongly:

the reaction is proportional to the inconvenience suffered by the dogs. After considering testers dogs are returning to the herd and let them go near them.

This action will never be carried by tourists, but it allows us to evaluate a dog team in an extreme situation for the safety of walkers and tranquility of the shepherds



Further study with the students of the Lycée Saint Gervais d'Auvergne Combrailles

2014 Octobre 16



1 - Approach the herd, tracking dogs.



2 - Dogs solicitation.



3 – Hard dogs sollicitations !
Dogs don't like the inconvenience caused to sheep and express themselves consequently.



4 - We let the dogs calm down a few minutes and cross the herd

Mirko di Francesco far at Parc de la Majella in Abruzzo

Testing the rattle within 2 or 3 meters of a dog on the road:

- The dog remain calm, does not bark, does not feel the need to express themselves, it is not with his sheep!

To the sheep:

-1: Dog stimulated, it reacts and remains remote.

Testers walk beside the herd.

-2: Second manipulation of the rattle very close to the herd: Dogs react, they have a proportional response to noise.

Testers walk beside the herd.

-3: Third attempt rattle highly agitated:

The 9 dogs in packs react strongly but remain manageable, the action is coordinated between dogs that also show discernment.

1 tester with all dogs 20 meters away, the shepherd stops gradually all dogs were advancing rapidly.

No reaction or aggression demonstration through near dogs after stress.

Conclusion: Behavioral stability from one year to the next, even if there were in 2014 four dogs more compared to the previous year, the reaction of dogs fits into a margin of tolerance with respect to the humans.

Evaluation of the Mirko di Francesco's farm. Dogs close to the herd.

Express with a few barking; calm dog keen eye; observe, analyze the situation.

Expressive, capable of strong discernment and decided actions.

Are attentive to the shepherd.

Dogs are deterrent, expressive and understood.

A single sheep killed by a wolf in 2013.

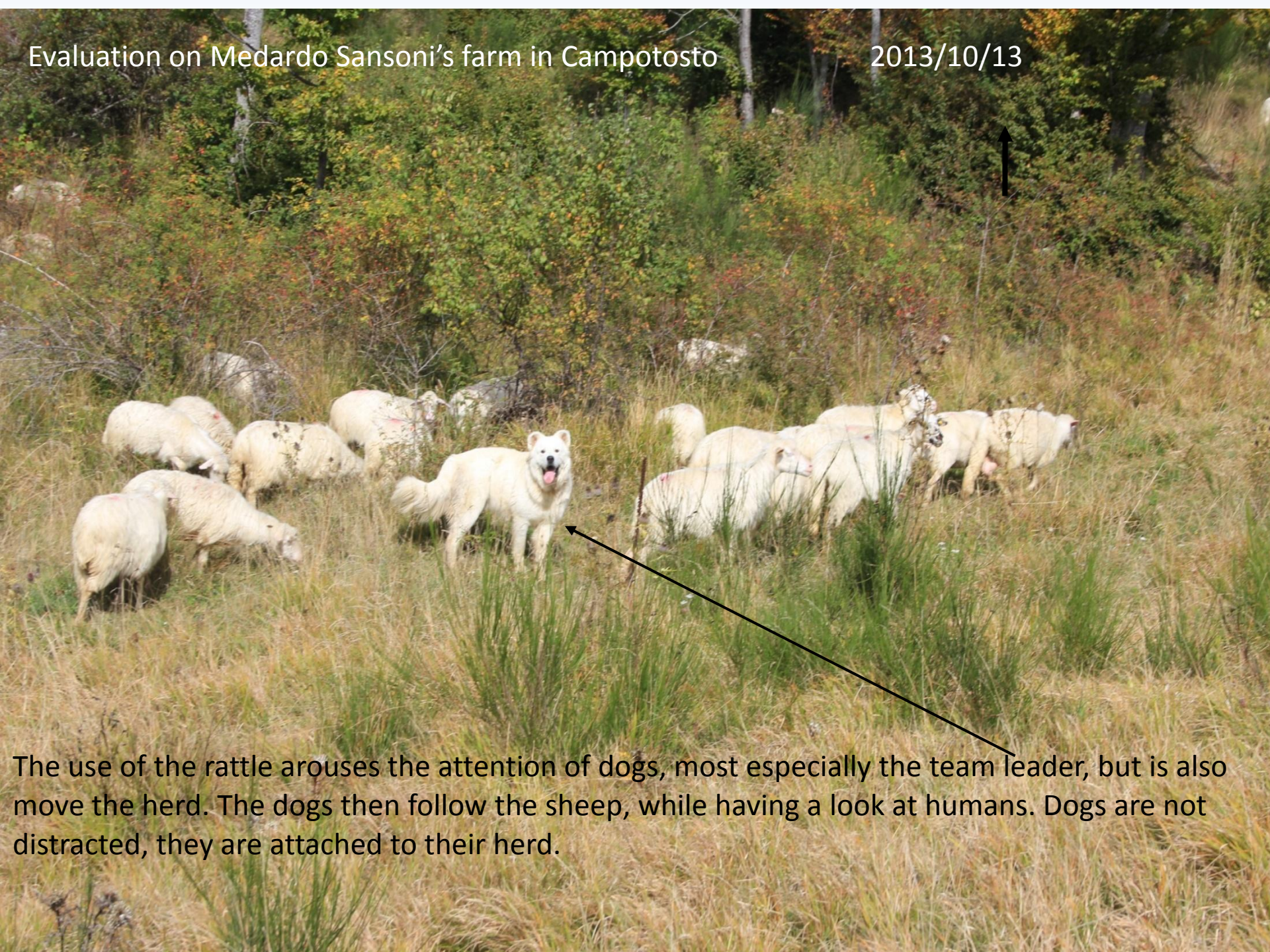
The selection of Mirko dogs focused on agile dogs and character well affirmed.

Gestural exercised by testers on dogs made us understand why the shepherds have no problem with tourists.

The large amount of predators (over hundred wolves in the park) reveals the value of his dogs.

Evaluation on Medardo Sansoni's farm in Campotosto

2013/10/13



The use of the rattle arouses the attention of dogs, most especially the team leader, but is also move the herd. The dogs then follow the sheep, while having a look at humans. Dogs are not distracted, they are attached to their herd.

In the herd during their journey in the bushes and thickets



The pack leader manage the action.

Only the pack leader comes among "tourists".



Then the herd and dogs back to their daily activities

3 dogs left about 5 min in pursuit of a roebuck which crossed the herd.





- Meeting with tourists.
- Presentation in exhibitions shepherds. The physical appearance of dogs is valued, the suppleness of character and judgment highlighted



Medardo Sansoni and Mirko di Francesco in an exhibition of "Shepherd of the Abruzzi" with their dogs 30 March 2014 Vasto Marina

Themes used during the evaluation

2	Several dogs to herd	
A	Ease to the herd	x
B1	Protection, sociability - Approach by humans	x
B2	Protection, sociability - Hearing Solicitation	x
B3 a	Protection, sociability - visual Solicitation - Human Movement	x
B3 b	Protection, sociability - visual Solicitation - Object Movement	x
B4	Protection, sociability - Rapid human movement	
B5	Protection, sociability - Moving provoked the herd	x
C	Sociability towards a foreign congener	
D	Relationship with the user	x
E	Reaction to strong acoustic stress	x
F	Ability to remain at work	x

Evaluation of the farm :

Dogs close to the herd.

Express with a few barking.

Calm dogs keen eye, observing and analyzing the situation, expressive, courageous. Their behavior is the result of human attitude towards them, they are capable of understanding and especially initiative.

No aggressive reaction or demonstration of aggressiveness after practicing gestures test.

Medardo regularly puts puppies in the presence of foreigners when they come to the farm.



1



2

Evaluation Mario Borraro Castropignano Farm.
16 october 2013 and 19 october 2014
A hundred sheep

CONCLUSION:

After developing the test subjects (1)
 dogs are also stroked by the students of the Lycée Saint
 Gervais d'Auvergne Combrailles(2 et 3)

Conclusion of the second evaluation:

Dogs take into consideration the presence of their shepherd.
 They are deterrent and are discerning in their actions.
 In this region, all herds that have no dog have been attacked
 by wolves. But this one has never been attacked, so dogs are
 very effective and essentials.



3



4

Fabrizio
Caputi

Once over there, a day like many others

Three Abruzzo Shepherds put to flight seven wolves.

Here a dog pushing a predator. During the pursuit, arrived at fifty or sixty meters to the herd, dogs are coming back by protection to cattle. They have not left alone their beasts. They did not let distract.

Fall 2012 National Park of Abruzzo and Molise region Lazio Villetta Barrea



Mountains of the Duchessa in the province of Rieti, near the sheepfolds: Abruzzo shepherd hunts three wolves before returning to sheep.



Matteo Luciani
PHOTOGRAPHY



Here ten 10500 ovine animals at the annual gathering at Campo Imperatore August 5, 2015: each herd remain with guard dogs. At the end of the event, each set "sheep / dog" back to his pasture. The crossing in many places of tourist crowds is made without doubts either side and tranquility.

Prevention of predation, and monitoring of wolves with GPS collars

The Majella National Park is a protected area of 750 km² with the highest density of wolves in the world:
The park counts 100 to 110 wolves or nine to ten packs.

In the park where there are still of ovine farming activities, cattle and horses in the wild, the various aspects of predation are studied.

All Park farmers use several means of protection:

- The almost daily presence of a shepherd.
- The regrouping of the herd every night in parks with electrified fences or fixed nets.
- Protection of the herd by dogs
 - who are very attached to it
 - who not leaving it
 - who are expressive but not aggressive

Dogs used, called Abruzzo shepherd come from the pastoral world.

The conflict with farmers is relatively low thanks to technical support and the support offered for the durability and the improvement of protection levels.

Pets are only 5% of the predator's diet. The rest being wild animals such as wild boar, deer, roe deer that are present in sufficient numbers..

For example, near Teramo, a town outside the perimeter of a park, a herd of 150 wolves was spotted.

The installation of a GPS collar on one wolf per each pack tracks the movement of wolves, and so measure the effectiveness of protection.

On the following picture you can see the locations of a wolf owned by a pack of ten and the gathering site and the location of the den. During an experimental monitoring year, the shepherd of the flock had no sheep killed while he saw a wolf wandering near the sheepfold.

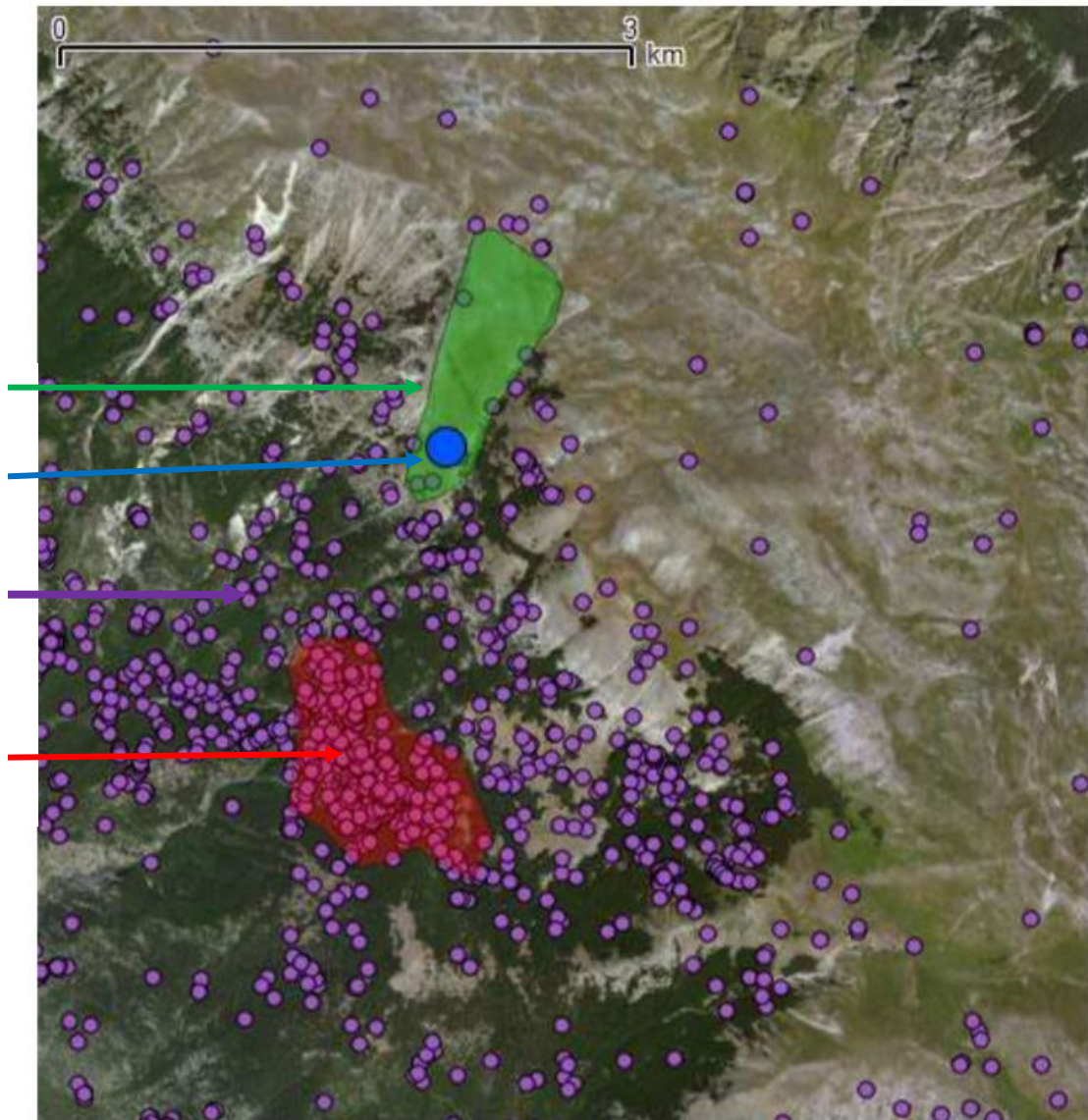
GPS tracking

Green: the pasture

Blue: The night parc

Purple: moving of the female wolf

Red: the den and the meeting place of the female wolf and wolf (around ten)



Breeders records

At the question: do you have any problems with wolves? Here is the the Shepherds answer:.....

Nicola Biondi de Celano

There are many years that we are moving forward with pastoralism. With the Abruzzo shepherd, I never had a problem.

Dante Caniglia de San Benedetto De Marsi: I asked, but here they all have dogs, and no one have been lost.

Marco Petrella de Patolla Peligna : To Pacentro wolves acted following a typical pattern called by shepherds "the spuntatura": they isolated a few ovine animals and killed them. This attack could have been prevented if the dogs were used. The herd being close to the farm, the dogs were left buildings guard



Massimo Paglione de Laniano Ciao Mario. I don't think. I'll ask and if i have something, I will send you information.

*N.M. Shepherd to down Molise
Had the wolves last visit the day before Christmas in 2014, around 18 hours: it is very early compared to other times. Wolves have killed him a ram. In total this year 13 animals died because of the wolf. The farm is located at 2 km from the country, it has only driving dogs are not guard dogs. It has acquired the electric fence nets sheep and hopes to resolve the issue. NM is a shepherd graduate, but without pastoral culture.

Luca Innamorato, from Bojano : I had three sheep killed in one night with a 4 years old dog, another 1 year old and a last six months old with a herd of 500 sheep. I brought immediately the herd with the rest of the sheep and the other dogs, wolves are not shown. We have 1400 sheep ! There are 10 dogs including 2 puppies and 3 females: wolves stay away.



The wolf does not pass:

- An ancestral tradition.**
- Excellent quality dog.**
- A result obtained by the work of the shepherds.**

Participated in the study

- The « Société Centrale Canine », The « Pastor'Alpes », Club of the Eastern Italian Shepherds and with :

Massucci Mario: Judge protection dogs, protection dogs GT SCC manager, Pdt Pastor'Alpes

Mario Montaldo: Translator / investigator,

Jacques Deschenaud: Shooting

- Switzerland Protection dog with

Dr Ueli pfitzer: President of the Swiss Association of protection dogs

Jenny Dornig: Mobile Intervention Group Swiss herds Protection

Georg Höllbacher & Anna Drabosenig National Protecting Herds Consultation Service of Austria

- Lycée Des Combrailles de Saint Gervais d'Auvergne avec

Gilles Schneider Cynotechnicien

Jean-Charles Labat Teacher with class BAC Pro Canine Breeder Session 2013/2014

- **Simone Angelucci**, PE DVM Responsabile Ufficio Vet. Verinario e Zootechnia Medico Veterinario n. 159 Ord

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La **Société Centrale Canine** is an association founded for the improvement of breeds of dogs in France, the recognized profit association, was founded by amateur breeders in 1881.

Pictures : Mario Massucci, *Georg Höllbacher*, *Anna Drabosenig*, *Fabrizio Caputi*, *Matteo Luciani*

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