

The farmers using drones to watch their flocks by flight

Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

1 Warmer

Match the animals with the sounds they make.

- | | |
|-----------|----------|
| 1. dogs | a. howl |
| 2. cattle | b. miaow |
| 3. cats | c. bleat |
| 4. wolves | d. bark |
| 5. sheep | e. neigh |
| 6. horses | f. moo |

2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers will help you.

calves

flock

herd (noun)

stag

herd (verb)

1. If you _____ animals, you make them move together as a group to another place. (para 1)
2. A _____ is a large group of animals of the same type that live and move about together. (para 2)
3. _____ are young cows. (para 3)
4. A _____ is a group of sheep, goats or birds. (para 4)
5. A _____ is a male deer. (para 4)

treat

affordable

innovate

approach

enjoyable

6. If you _____, you invent or begin using new ideas, methods, equipment etc. (para 5)
7. An _____ is a particular way of thinking or dealing with something. (para 6)
8. A _____ is something special you give someone. (para 7)
9. An _____ experience gives you great pleasure. (para 8)
10. If something is _____, it is cheap enough for ordinary people to buy. (para 9)

3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

1. Why did Corey Lambeth originally buy a drone?
2. Where does Jason Rentoul live?
3. Where did he get the idea to use a drone to herd sheep?
4. Which animals can become aggressive around sheepdogs?
5. Where does Wojtek Behnke have a farm?
6. How many sheep does Wojtek Behnke have?

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Sky shepherds: the farmers using drones to watch their flocks by flight

Alyx Gorman

26 December, 2019

- 1 Corey Lambeth, a New Zealand farmer, bought a drone for photography, but he quickly realized he could use it in a more practical way. "I thought, 'I'll just try it with the sheep and see what happens', and it actually worked out quite well," he says. Now Lambeth has been using a drone "like another dog" to herd sheep for three years.
- 2 "It saves a lot of time when herding," says Jason Rentoul, a farmer in Marlborough, New Zealand. He has been using drones with herds of sheep, deer and cattle for three years. "Sometimes it might take four men with at least two dogs each, and now, with a drone, you can do that with two men and in a lot less time."
- 3 He had to experiment a lot at first. Rentoul bought his first drone after watching a YouTube video of another farmer using one to herd deer. In the early days, he lost drones to water damage and once while trying to transport a bottle of wine. "I now try and keep it fairly simple and low cost," he says. Rentoul finds the drone particularly useful when herding deer. Unlike a sheepdog, a drone can move faster than a deer. The drone also works well for cattle with calves, which can be aggressive around sheepdogs.
- 4 That's not the only way his dogs have benefitted from the drone. "They work together, the dog and drone. It was surprising how quickly the dogs worked it out. At first some of the dogs didn't like the drone, and they barked at it, but very quickly they realized that the drone was there to help them. Sometimes they have to run a kilometre to get to a flock of sheep, and they seem to find the animals quicker because they can hear the drone and know it is working ahead of them." The dogs will also stand under the drone when they're feeling threatened by stags or cattle. "That's their safe place because the animals won't come near the drone."
- 5 Lambeth, too, has learned to innovate. After a period of successful herding, his flock became used to the drone and stopped responding to it. So he recorded audio of his dogs barking and now plays that sound through the drone. "It's quite funny seeing the drone flying around, barking at the sheep."
- 6 Wojtek Behnke, a farmer in England, is taking a different approach. After watching videos of sheep being herded by drone in New Zealand, Behnke bought one. Now he's involved in the world's first "positive-association" study using drones.
- 7 Behnke separated a group of five sheep from his flock and got them used to his drone. Once the sheep were happy, he started creating positive associations. He threw special treats under the drone's path. When the sheep had learned that the drone brought them treats, he introduced them back to the flock. "Within a couple of weeks, I had 100 sheep following the drone." Now all 300 of Behnke's sheep can be led by a drone over short distances.
- 8 Behnke believes this can have an impact on the sheep's quality of life. "We measure 'a good life' by how many positive experiences they have throughout their lifetime and how many negative. The more positive, the more they've had a good life. I imagine being chased by dogs is less enjoyable than following something around, thinking 'Oh this is fun; I might get a treat'."
- 9 All the farmers in this story agree that the biggest advantage of using drones is for monitoring. Drones are an affordable set of eyes in the sky. They make checks on stock and crops faster without having to disturb the animals.

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4 Comprehension check

Match the beginnings and endings to make statements about the text.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Jason Rentoul believes that drones ... | a. ... they stand under the drone. |
| 2. He bought his first drone after ... | b. ... that the best use for drones is checking on stock and crops. |
| 3. He was surprised how quickly ... | c. ... save a lot of time when herding. |
| 4. When the dogs feel threatened by stags or cattle, ... | d. ... they associate with the drone so they follow it. |
| 5. Wojtek Behnke gives his sheep special treats, which ... | e. ... watching a video of a farmer using one to herd deer. |
| 6. All the farmers agree ... | f. ... his dogs got used to the drone. |

5 Chunks

Rearrange the words to make phrases from the text.

- a practical in way more
- less a in time lot
- only that's the way not
- a within weeks of couple
- in a sky the of set eyes
- the help was drone there them to

6 Phrases with prepositions

Complete the phrases from the text using prepositions.

to from at in from

- benefit _____
- bark _____
- respond _____
- involved _____
- separate _____

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7 Word stress

Put these words from the text into two groups according to their stress.

damage
involve

threaten
measure

respond
impact

approach
disturb

record (verb)
transport (verb)

distance
special

A o o	B o o

8 Discussion

- Would you like to have a drone? Why? Why not?

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KEY

1 Warmer

1. d
2. f
3. b
4. a
5. c
6. e

2 Key words

1. herd (verb)
2. herd (noun)
3. calves
4. flock
5. stag
6. innovate
7. approach
8. treat
9. enjoyable
10. affordable

3 Find the information

1. for photography
2. Marlborough, New Zealand
3. from a YouTube video
4. cattle with calves
5. England
6. 300

4 Comprehension check

1. c
2. e
3. f
4. a
5. d
6. b

5 Chunks

1. in a more practical way
2. in a lot less time
3. that's not the only way
4. within a couple of weeks
5. a set of eyes in the sky
6. the drone was there to help them

6 Phrases with prepositions

1. from
2. at
3. to
4. in
5. from

7 Word stress

A 0 0	B 0 0
damage	respond
threaten	approach
distance	record
measure	involve
impact	disturb
special	transport