



ABOVE: Gray (left) and Larry King.

# Jackal repellent set to cut stock losses

Brothers' invention earns a SABS award  
by Rosemary Wilson

**A** REVOLUTIONARY sheep collar, which stops jackals killing lambs, kids, sheep and goats, has earned awards in the industrial and engineering categories of the coveted 1999 SA Bureau of Standards Design Institute Awards.

Developed by two Eastern Cape farmers who had become desperate about their rampant jackal problem, the KingCollar slips around the necks of young animals, protecting them against the deadly bites of jackals.

At a recent glittering gala in Pretoria at the SABS complex, the prestigious awards were made to proud brothers Gray and Larry King of Bedford and Tarkastad, respectively, in recognition of their entrepreneurial drive.

The King brothers devised the strong semi-rigid collar to control the jackals after hunting, gin traps and poison had failed. Since experimenting with the collars a few years ago,

they have not lost a single lamb to jackals and they have seen the predator population on their farms dwindle.

In a country with about 29 million sheep and 4 million Angora goats, their simple and inexpensive device is set to save small stock farmers a fortune. KingCollar is non-poisonous and environmentally friendly. It comes in two sizes – the small one (costs R3) protects young lambs and kids up to two months old and the larger one (costs R5) protects stock until they have grown too big to be attacked by jackals. The collar is adjustable, reusable, UV resistant and has a lifespan of at least five years.

South Africa's jackal problem at present is enormous as the lambing and kidding season is in full swing. Graziers in some areas can expect to lose up to 40% of new stock to predators, mainly caracal and blackbacked jackals.

As a sheep carcass fetches about

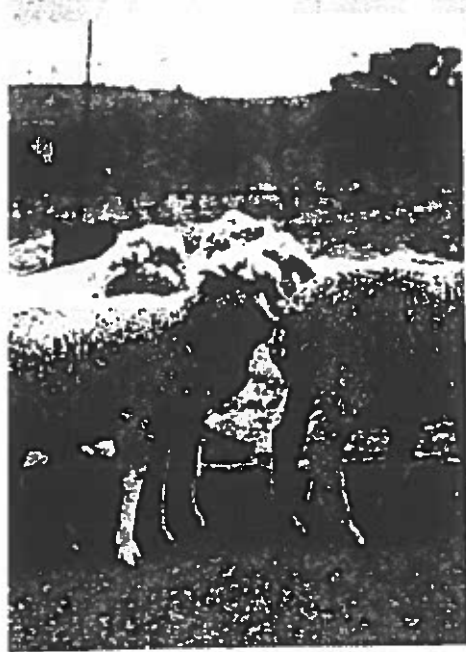
R200 on the market, helpless farmers countrywide could lose millions of rand.

"Like all farmers with jackal problems, we found that the usual combat tactics simply didn't work," said Gray King from his family's farm, Kingsvale, in Bedford.

"We took all the precautions – we kept the lambs and ewes in safe areas as long as possible, but we were always outsmarted. Sooner or later, the stock's feed runs out and then you have lambs aged anything from two weeks to two months in danger of having to face jackals."

## Only a defensive device

The collar does not hurt, harm, kill or make jackals run away. It is only a defensive device and does not contain poison. A jackal cannot get a grip on the neck as the collar covers the animal's cheek and the underside of the neck, protecting the nerve running down the side of the face.



**TOP LEFT:** These sheep will be safe in the veld.

**TOP RIGHT:** The collar won't damage wool or mohair.

**LEFT:** Gray King with the "stock-saving" collar.

**RIGHT:** Jackals always target an animal's neck.

This is the first spot targeted by a jackal as a bite there causes paralysis before its prey is suffocated by being bitten on the underside of its windpipe.

The collars do not damage wool or mohair and have small holes for the release of moisture, are adjustable for growing lambs, allow free movement of the neck and head and don't interfere with suckling or grazing.

Farmers who use the collar have reported an immediate and permanent end to kills by jackal. The collar also seems to reduce losses to lynx.

By trial and error, the brothers developed and patented their collar with the technical expertise of Mike Stent, of Mekelek, a plastic manufacturing company in East London. Now they believe their successful experiment, resulting in more than 20 000 collars being sold across the country, is about to turn into a fully fledged business with all family members being roped in. They have brought their own machinery to

manufacture the products.

"There are quite a few farmers we know who have been forced to switch from sheep farming because of jackals," said Mr King. "And we were determined not to become a statistic as well."

The collar also saves graziers a great deal of time. Once fitted, lambs may be safely released into the veld; adjustments can be made to collars when the lambs are routinely handled.

One local farmer in the Bedford district, Geoff Hobson, of Penderry, has been using the collars since January 1998. Until now, he has had no losses to jackals even though they were a major problem on the farm. He had been so desperate that he resorted to hunting jackals from a helicopter.

"Other than a lamb with a bite on the hindquarters, so far no users have suffered any loss that can be attributed to jackals. The collars also reduce losses to lynx."

More importantly, widespread use of the collar will have a major environmental impact. Farmers using traditional control methods inadvertently kill many non-target animals. Poison in particular can be dangerous, remaining active in the environment for a long time and resulting in widespread death of wildlife.

With sheep and goats armed with KingCollars, a large portion of the jackals' food supply is removed. The jackals that remain in its territory will change their diet to rodents or move to farms where sheep are unprotected. As with all wild animals, the jackal population is only as large as its food supply.

As the availability of prey becomes more scarce, the birth rate of jackals will naturally decrease.

Contact Gray King, Kingsvale farm, PO Box 116, Bedford, 5780, tel (046) 685-0645; or Larry King, Newstead farm, PO Box 98, Tarkastad, 5370, tel (045) 846-9155, fax (046) 685-0645. □