

# TAKING THE FIGHT FORWARD

Rural Crime Report 2018



## Latest trends

What's happening in the fight against rural crime?



## Latest figures

Our claims data shows where the battle is being won and lost



## Latest insights

From the people living and working on the frontline



**NFU Mutual**

# RURAL CRIME REPORT 2018

In 2017 rural crime  
cost the UK

**£44.5m**

NFU Mutual is the UK's leading rural insurer. We insure three quarters of all UK farms, as well as thousands of rural businesses up and down the country. As a mutual, we put the needs of our members first. Our commitment to countryside communities means we're committed to both understanding and helping to combat rural crime.

Our annual Rural Crime Report is based on claims data gathered from our 300 Agent offices located in towns and villages across the UK. It offers unique insights into the financial costs of rural crime, as well as the adverse impact it has on all those who live, work, farm and enjoy the countryside.

Our work on rural crime also plays a vital role in raising awareness of the scale of the problem, driving action at an individual, community and national level.

Over the next few pages you'll discover which regions are worst hit by crime, tips and advice on beating the criminals, and what those involved in the fight think needs to be done to protect farms and rural businesses.



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# STANDING TOGETHER AGAINST RURAL CRIME



**Christine Kennedy**  
Director  
NFU Mutual

Living and working on a farm in Northern Ireland, I am acutely aware of the impact rural crime has on farmers and their families. Wherever I go in the countryside, I hear too many reports from farmers about what they've had stolen, how their neighbours are being targeted, and suspicious people and vehicles seen around the farmyard and fields.

For farmers, rural crime is not just about the inconvenience of having a tractor taken. Sorting out insurance claims, making police reports and sourcing replacement vehicles is a major disruption on a busy farm, but increasingly, we are hearing that thefts are carefully planned and organised by gangs and some farms are being repeatedly targeted. The knowledge that thieves have watched your movements and can come onto your farm to steal leads to long-term anxiety.

Unlike most urban businesses, farmers can't lock-up all of their machinery and equipment in one secure building at night. Farms are family homes as well as places of work, and worrying about every night-time noise in the farmyard is enough to drive already hard-pressed farmers to consider their future.

Today the impact of rural crime is also being felt by the wider public. Farm vehicles are stolen to commit larger scale crimes, such as ram raiding cashpoints in nearby towns. Missing livestock strikes at the centre of our animal traceability system and can undermine the integrity of our food security. The global demand for stolen agricultural machinery is attracting organised criminal gangs to the countryside.

If our family farms are to survive without becoming fortresses, this has to stop. So what can be done?

Knowing that rural crime is one of the most concerning issues for our members, at NFU Mutual we share our claims statistics and use our expertise to help farmers protect their possessions, and to help police effectively tackle the issue. We also encourage communities to work closely together to combat rural crime.

Since 2010 we have invested over £1 million in rural security initiatives that have delivered good results. However our experience tells us that the criminals don't give up. They seek new targets and find new and more sophisticated ways to get around security measures. This means farmers face an on-going battle to stay one step ahead of thieves. At NFU Mutual we'll be fighting alongside them, using our expertise to help them protect their farms, livestock and families.

NFU Mutual shares its claims statistics and expertise to help farmers protect their possessions, and the police to effectively tackle rural crime.

# FIGHTING BACK



**Tim Price**  
NFU Mutual  
Rural Affairs Specialist

Since 2010, when country people joined forces with police, manufacturers and NFU Mutual to tackle rocketing machinery thefts, the cost of rural crime has been kept under control.

However, in 2017 we're alarmed to see it on the rise once again, this time fuelled by a new breed of determined and brazen thieves who are using a combination of brute force and technological knowhow to steal from farms and country homes.

Crime like the theft of a loader often leads to an even more serious offence being committed. In the last year we've seen loaders used to smash into village shops to steal cash machines.

As well as causing huge structural damage, these raids often lead to the shop owners deciding not to replace the ATM to avoid a future attack. This leaves rural communities already facing the closure of local bank branches with a further loss of access to services.

Protecting the fabric of rural life is what drives NFU Mutual to support farmers and country people in the fight against crime. Amid the gloom there are beacons of light.

Police Scotland's SPARC initiative, for instance, is bringing down the cost of rural crime in Scotland. And good schemes supported by police forces elsewhere are also proving effective.

However we would like to see more collaboration between forces. It's not enough for one county's rural crime initiative to simply displace crime to a neighbouring county. We're fighting to see crime removed from the countryside.

## Our data has highlighted some emerging crime trends



**Limited police resources** and **repeat attacks** are the biggest concerns for people living in the countryside



**Quads/ATVs, tools, machinery** and **4x4s** are topping thieves' wish lists



**Nearly 1/3** of NFU Mutual Agents know someone who has **changed the way they live or farm as a result of rural crime**







**CCTV** is one of the most common security measures being installed

# THE RISING COST OF RURAL CRIME

In 2017 the cost of rural crime increased by

**13.4%**

Based on NFU Mutual claims data, we estimate rural crime cost the UK £44.5million in 2017. This is a substantial increase of 13.4%, or around £5 million, since 2016. It can't be accounted for by a small increase in the most expensive crimes either. Over last 12 months the cost of almost every type of crime has risen in almost every area of the UK. The problems faced by our rural communities are huge, and still growing. More needs to be done.

	Cost to the UK 2016	Cost to the UK 2017	Up or down
 Agricultural vehicle theft	<b>£5.4m</b>	<b>£5.9m</b>	▲
 Land Rover Defender theft	<b>£2.1m</b>	<b>£1.9m</b>	▼
 Quad/ATV theft	<b>£2.0m</b>	<b>£2.3m</b>	▲
 Livestock theft	<b>£2.2m</b>	<b>£2.4m</b>	▲



# WHERE THE BATTLE IS BEING WON AND LOST

The cost of rural crime is at its highest since 2013. However the picture isn't quite the same in every part of the UK. In Scotland in particular, the cost of rural crime continues to fall. The North East has also seen a decline in the cost of theft, while Wales, the Midlands and South East have seen sharp increases. These tables show which areas have been worst hit.

	Cost in 2016	Cost in 2017	% Change
East	£5.6M	£5.7M	1.2%
Midlands	£6.7M	£8.8M	31.8%
North East	£7.3M	£6.8M	-6.5%
North West	£2.8M	£3.4M	21.6%
Northern Ireland	£2.5M	£2.6M	5.3%
Scotland	£1.6M	£1.5M	-3.8%
South East	£5.9M	£7.6M	30.4%
South West	£5.6M	£5.9M	5.3%
Wales	£1.3M	£1.9M	41.4%
<b>Cost to the UK</b>	<b>£39.2m</b>	<b>£44.5m</b>	<b>13.4%</b>

Based on NFU Mutual claims statistics, costs rounded to nearest £100,000



<b>Worst affected counties by cost</b>	<b>Cost in 2016</b>	<b>Cost in 2017</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Lincolnshire	£2,499,521	£2,116,791	-15.3%
Cambridgeshire	£1,609,305	£1,716,879	6.7%
West Yorkshire	£1,503,233	£1,708,312	13.6%
Essex	£1,814,548	£1,635,652	-9.9%
Lancashire	£1,257,110	£1,547,003	23.1%
Kent	£1,548,294	£1,525,463	-1.5%
Gloucestershire	£1,607,368	£1,402,599	-12.7%
Somerset	£1,323,341	£1,275,020	-3.7%
Suffolk	£976,021	£1,243,459	27.4%
Warwickshire	£841,340	£1,101,511	30.9%
Shropshire	£717,454	£1,087,139	51.5%
Derbyshire	£1,026,593	£1,053,524	2.6%
Hampshire	£707,224	£1,052,581	48.8%
Worcestershire	£1,065,751	£1,036,015	-2.8%
Leicestershire	£788,695	£1,033,361	31.0%
Hertfordshire	£425,938	£986,724	131.7%
Northamptonshire	£550,183	£976,756	77.5%
North Yorkshire	£1,146,371	£954,597	-16.7%
Cheshire	£743,541	£930,402	25.1%
Staffordshire	£638,024	£916,544	43.7%
Dorset	£604,329	£881,541	45.9%
Surrey	£427,489	£862,099	101.7%
West Midlands	£392,999	£843,810	114.7%
Wiltshire	£566,201	£829,003	46.4%
Herefordshire	£734,565	£801,996	9.2%
Nottinghamshire	£691,882	£798,377	15.4%
County Down	£650,944	£781,473	20.1%
Norfolk	£906,868	£680,433	-25.0%
South Yorkshire	£786,865	£643,910	-18.2%
Oxfordshire	£583,227	£628,154	7.7%

The 30 worst affected counties by cost in 2017, based on NFU Mutual claims statistics

# MEDIEVAL SOLUTIONS TO A MODERN SCOURGE

To protect their crops and keep criminals off their land, an increasing number of farmers are bolstering modern security measures with medieval methods seen centuries ago.

When used in conjunction with the latest technology, traditional security can be extremely effective, particularly for keeping away thieves who no longer fear being caught on CCTV, or who have the skills to overcome electronic security systems.

Medieval measures being adopted include:



**Earth banks and ditches.** Last used to protect medieval manors, earth works are being installed along field boundaries to stop criminals driving 4x4s onto farmland.



**Single entry points.** Just like Norman castles, having only one way in and out deters thieves who like a range of exits.



**Reinforced gates.** To protect the entrances to farmyards from ram raids.



**Barricaded strong rooms.** In the same way medieval homesteaders built special rooms to store gold and silver, modern farmers are using them to protect expensive tools and chemicals.



**High yard fences.** To stop intruders climbing over, just like historic stockades.



**Protective animals.** Animals such as geese and dogs still provide a useful low-tech alarm system, just as they did hundreds of years ago.

As part of their response to rural crime, Gloucestershire Constabulary has teamed up with local landowners to dig trenches and bunds to stop poachers in their tracks.

The sizes of the earth barriers vary according to the needs of the farmer and the land itself. One farm, for example, has a bund of about three feet tall with a trench two feet deep alongside. The barriers already cover a distance of over a mile.

“The aim of this latest measure of target hardening is to protect farmland from infiltration by poachers and hare coursers, as well as preventing organised crime groups from crossing the land in order to steal farm machinery.”

PC Ashley Weller, Rural Crime Officer for the Cotswolds



# IMPROVE YOUR OWN SECURITY

With rural crime on the increase, beefing up your security has never been as important as it is today. Good security is crucial for protecting your property and your business. Of course, locking away everything of any value isn't always practical on a working farm. But there are many other measures you can take that will make life for the rural thieves as difficult as possible, and will ensure you're not an easy target.

Security for rural properties falls into three main categories. It's a good idea to do as much from each as you can.



## Physical

- Install fences
- Close and lock gates
- Secure sheds and outbuildings
- Lock away machinery and tools
- Use dogs or geese as early warning
- Use mechanical immobilisers on vehicles
- Mark livestock and property



## Community

- Look out for your neighbours
- Join a Farm Watch scheme
- Share suspicious sightings with local community
- Maintain links with the police
- Report all crimes to the police



## Technology

- Install CCTV
- Use security lighting in yards and drives
- Fit burglar alarms with infra-red motion detection
- Add a tracking or location device
- Set up geo-fence alerts
- Activate digital immobilisers



**Clive Harris**  
NFU Mutual Agricultural  
Vehicle Specialist

## Protecting farm vehicles

The cost of farm vehicle theft rose by half a million pounds in 2017. It's big business for the organised gangs who are taking expensive machinery and either cloning it for sale here, or shipping it across the world.

The most effective way to protect your agricultural vehicles from thieves is with multiple layers of security. Visual deterrents such as the CESAR marking system and etching glass with VIN numbers immediately make vehicles less attractive to criminals. Immobilisers and chip keys are also very effective – thieves can't take what they can't start.

Keeping your vehicles locked and out of sight is another simple but helpful step. So is knowing what you own. Taking pictures of your vehicles and recording serial numbers means, if they are taken and recovered, you're more likely to get them back quickly.

**If you'd like advice on security, speak to the crime prevention officer at your local police force, or arrange a consultation with NFU Mutual Risk Management Services.**

# SPARC – WINNING THE FIGHT IN SCOTLAND

The cost of farm vehicle theft in Scotland has fallen by

# 48%

since 2015

One of NFU Mutual's tactics in the battle against rural crime involves joining forces with the police to fund and operate a number of security initiatives. Since 2010 we have invested over £1.2m to support schemes designed to reduce crime in the countryside.

SPARC, the Scotland Partnership Against Rural Crime, is a shining example of the difference such an initiative can actually make.

Founded in 2015 to target increasing rural crime across Scotland, SPARC encourages working partnerships between rural stakeholders and police forces. So far NFU Mutual has provided more than £135,000 to fund the scheme.

This funding has gone towards training officers in the investigation and prevention of a range of rural crimes. It's used to support operations to detect vehicle and livestock theft, and to establish new schemes to prevent dog attacks on livestock.

To deliver the SPARC initiative, Police Scotland and NFU Mutual work closely with a number of rural organisations in Scotland, including NFU Scotland, Scottish Land and Estates, the Scottish Business Resilience Centre, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and Scottish Government.

The results? Tractor and quad theft costs in Scotland have fallen by almost half in the three years since SPARC was established. This is in stark contrast to our latest claim statistics – which show that in 2017 the cost of rural theft across the UK as a whole rose by 13.4%. Proof that SPARC is helping police to fight crime in the Scottish countryside.



“Working closely with our partner organisations means we can quickly respond to emerging trends and crime hot spots – sending a clear message to would-be thieves.”

Chief Superintendent John McKenzie, Chair of SPARC

# VOICES ON THE GROUND



**Guy Smith**  
Deputy President  
NFU

## The time for action is now

Without a doubt, rural crime is one of the subjects brought up most frequently to me at meetings I have with farmers and growers across the country. It is described to me as one of the most pressing, impactful and devastating issues farmers are dealing with at the moment. As a farmer myself, I share their concerns.

The impacts are far-reaching. Farms are not only places of business, but they are homes for farmers and their family. It is not right that farmers and rural communities are subject to intimidation, violence, threats and criminal acts right on their doorstep.

As NFU Mutual figures show, the cost of rural crime is at its highest for years. That is why it is a top priority for the NFU, and why we are pushing this issue up the government agenda.

It is also why we have launched a dedicated rural crime reporting line with Crimestoppers UK. Farmers, rural businesses and the public can call **0800 783 0137** to anonymously give information about large-scale, industrial fly-tipping, hare coursing, livestock theft and machinery theft, and begin to end this blight on our countryside.

It is time that we saw some considerable action being taken by government and police to curb increasing crime in the countryside, and allow farmers to do what they do best – producing food for the nation.



**Craig Naylor**  
Deputy Chief Constable –  
National Police Chief's  
Council (NPCC) for  
Rural Affairs

## Improving rural policing

Over the last year police and key rural partners have developed the first ever UK-wide policing strategy to tackle rural crime (NPCC Rural Affairs Strategy 2018-2021). The strategy is supported by all UK Chief Constables and recently launched at the NPCC Rural Affairs Summit.

The strategy identifies key rural crime priorities that need new focus. These include theft of farm equipment and machinery, livestock-related crimes, fly-tipping, poaching, equine crime and fuel theft.

However the police can't implement the strategy alone. It is important that partners continue to work with us, and that rural communities continue to be our eyes and ears by reporting crime and suspicious incidents.

With a national partnership and problem-solving approach; with a focus on prevention, reassurance, developing intelligence and enforcement against organised crime groups, our belief is that together we can improve the lives of our rural communities and bring offenders to justice.

# VOICES ON THE GROUND



**Julia Mulligan**  
North Yorkshire's Police and  
Crime Commissioner and  
Chair of the National Rural  
Crime Network

## Listening to rural communities

As a Police and Crime Commissioner for a rural force and someone who grew up on a hill farm, I understand the impact of rural crime is far-reaching and that rural communities face challenges and expense day-in, day-out. My work as Chair of the National Rural Crime Network (NRCN) is to promote the needs of rural communities, both to the police and in the corridors of power.

In 2015 the NRCN asked people living and working in the countryside to share their views and experiences through our Rural Crime survey. One major concern was that reporting crime felt like a waste of time because police wouldn't investigate or have the resources to take action. I frequently get told as well that the police show a lack of understanding when they are contacted. Very often, the outcome at court is also felt to be poor.

This becomes a damaging cycle. Underreporting means rural crime is underestimated, and therefore not prioritised or sufficiently resourced.

Since the 2015 survey threw light on these issues, there has been progress. More police forces now have dedicated rural crime teams and rural officers. However we recognise there is more to do.

This is why we have just re-run the survey. Over 20,200 people have responded (more than in 2015). The results will allow us to measure progress and continue to press our case with government for an improved police service for all of us living and working in the countryside.



**Trish Pickford**  
Head of Welfare  
at farming charity  
The Royal Agricultural  
Benevolent Institution

## Supporting the victims of crime

A lot of the people R.A.B.I supports are elderly and living alone in rural areas. Unfortunately this can make them a target for criminals.

One lady contacted us for help because she'd lost around £5,000 in a scam. She received a phone call from someone claiming to be from her bank. They said her account had been hacked and that she would need to go and withdraw all of her money in person. They even sent a taxi to pick her up, and told her a uniformed policeman would call around later to collect the cash.

We're also approached by farmers who are in dire financial straits because they've had livestock, oil or expensive machinery stolen.

Thankfully, the number of people who turn to us as a direct consequence of crime is low. However, when you're already struggling, it doesn't take much to tip you over the edge.

If you need our help, call our Freephone Helpline **0808 281 9490**.



**Dorothea Delpech**  
PhD Researcher  
UCL Department of Security  
& Crime Science

## Understanding livestock crime

Our research is focused on the impact of livestock and wildlife crimes on farmers in the UK. The majority of the farmers who responded to a pilot survey reported that, over the previous three years, incidents of wildlife crime on their land had increased, with several reporting ‘too many to count’ or ‘over 100’ incidents over this space of time.

A larger scale survey is now being conducted to better understand the rates of livestock and wildlife crimes, and what particular features of farms make them more susceptible to these types of crime.

The underreporting of livestock and wildlife incidents to police has been acknowledged by stakeholders. But underreporting is not the only factor preventing a better understanding of farm crime rates. A Freedom of Information request to UK police forces has highlighted the need for a more consistent and accurate recording procedure across the UK. The current systems for recording crimes vary from region to region, making it hard to extract meaningful data, and potentially create the illusion that these crimes occur at far lower rates than they actually do.



**Jim McLaren**  
Farmer and  
NFU Mutual Director

## The fight against rural crime

Whether it’s the theft of machinery or livestock, or the deeply frustrating scourge of fly tipping, rural crime has a huge impact on its victims. Having the correct insurance is essential for a good night’s sleep. But even then, the inconvenience and emotional costs are impossible to fully quantify or cover.

Prevention is the best tool we have. The installation of even a basic security system, such as a motion-activated camera directed towards the fuel tank, can be enough to send the opportunistic criminal along the track.

Social media also plays a huge part. The ability to share images and details of potentially suspicious activity has been ‘weaponised’ by many countryside dwellers.

On the railways, the campaign ‘See it, Say it, Sorted’ has taken off. The same principal can apply in rural areas, where it is often easier to identify something out of the ordinary. We can all be eyes and ears on the frontline.

As a farmer based in Scotland, I am encouraged by the progress made by the joint initiative between NFU Mutual and Police Scotland. The sharing of expertise and intelligence, and a joined-up approach across Scotland, is making it harder for criminals to evade detection simply by moving their activity from one police force’s area to another.

# FIGHTING ON MANY DIFFERENT FRONTS

This report provides a comprehensive insight into rural theft. But there are other crimes that are also taking a toll on farming and rural communities. Dog attacks, fly-tipping and hare coursing are about so much more than dogs chasing animals or the dumping of rubbish. They involve horrific injury to livestock, contamination of our natural environment and organised criminal activity.



## Hare coursing

Hare coursing involves driving dogs and vehicles across fields in pursuit of a hare. It's an organised criminal activity that regularly sees farmers and their families threatened with violence as people descend onto their land in 4x4s to participate and illegally gamble on the event.

As well as intimidation, farmers suffer damage to crops, fields, and property as criminals drive recklessly across the land. On many occasions the gangs even return to the farm later to commit other crimes.



## Fly-tipping

When rubbish is illegally dumped on private land, landowners are often left to deal with the aftermath themselves. The cost of removing the rubbish can run into thousands of pounds. But the impact can be far more than financial. Contaminated waste poses a real threat to the health and welfare of farmers, their livestock and the surrounding environment.

According to the NFU's figures, fly-tipping affects two thirds of farmers in the UK. As incidents increase, more and more tonnes of rubbish are being dumped in the countryside each year.



**PC Dave Allen**  
Rural Crime Officer  
North Wales Police

## THE WORRYING FACT ABOUT LIVESTOCK WORRYING

The term ‘livestock worrying’ is so horribly misleading that I never use it. Livestock that has been ‘worried’ has usually been brutally attacked and sustained such horrific injuries that it rarely survives.

It’s a crime from which nobody benefits. Distraught dog owners may have to witness their family pet shot dead at the scene, or face the prospect of having it destroyed by order of the courts. The loss of their stock can also lead to farmers facing severe financial ruin or the loss of pedigree bloodlines, while living with the constant stress that it will inevitably happen again.

From the start of 2018 until the beginning of July, North Wales Police have recorded 82 ‘voluntary record’ attacks. Why voluntary? Because the Home Office does not require the police to formally record these crimes. And I know there are also many instances when such attacks go completely unreported.

This is not an issue particular to North Wales. It affects every rural community in the UK. But with no requirement to formally record livestock attacks, there is no true statistical picture of the scale or economic loss caused.

The police and government are waking up to the size of problem. Farming unions, NFU Mutual and dog owner groups are all working to address the issues of responsible dog ownership. However we all have a part to play. If ‘livestock worrying’ is to be treated with the seriousness it deserves, we must be able to paint a true picture. Which means reporting every attack. Because if you don’t report it, it never officially happened.

### Dog attacks on livestock

NFU Mutual is all too aware of the heartbreak and huge financial loss that dog attacks can cause. In the last two years the cost of dog attacks on livestock has risen by 67% to an estimated £1.6m per year.

For small farmers in particular, attacks on livestock can have a devastating impact on productivity. Insurance may cover the cost of treating injured animals or replacing stock killed, but the effect on breeding programmes can take years to overcome.

That’s why we’ve backed calls by the National Police Chiefs’ Council to make livestock worrying a recordable offence.



For more information or to download a copy of this report please visit [nfumutual.co.uk/ruralcrime](http://nfumutual.co.uk/ruralcrime)

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