



Issue 40 | December 2023

 @RuralCrimeNfk

Operation Randall

tackling rural crime
Newsletter

Introduction

Here we are again and this time we have reached the end of the year! Firstly, I best get the festivities out of the way and wish everyone a very merry Christmas and hope you all get some time off with your families and friends.

I think last month I mentioned hoping for not such a wet and windy month ahead. Sadly, November clearly didn't listen and as a country and county we have been battered by further storms sadly causing some shocking scenes along our coastline of erosion and flooding inland with the Broads area particularly affected. I was lucky to be invited to a local NFU branch meeting in the east last week and hear first hand the current struggles their members are going through with land completely under water and livestock too. It was great to hear the local branch supporting those affected as well as other members reaching out, it can be devastating not only financially to individuals but also take a massive toll on mental health of those affected.

Please remember you are not alone, there are many organisations that can offer support in various ways including the likes of Samaritans, Mind and some specifically setup to support the rural community YANA and RABI being 2 key ones.

On top of the current issues this time of year, some can find it lonely and difficult, so do reach out, check on your

neighbour, speak to your friends, ask the question 'how are you?' start the conversation – it might be far more appreciated than you believe.

Engagement Events

This month has been indoor only events thankfully with attendance at Norfolk NFU AGM earlier in the month when it was great to listen to the current NFU president Minette Batters who spoke so passionately about the rural communities and businesses. We also had many conversations with local farmers discussing crime prevention, one of my highlights being a farmer coming up to me and explaining since he had fitted some gates and locks, he hasn't had anywhere near the issues he used to have. The key message we put across is a little bit of prevention can make a huge difference, even small things!

Then we were kindly invited to NFU East Norfolk Group meeting where we presented an annual update and crime prevention advice.

Moving into this month we will be at the Norfolk County Council County Farms Annual Meeting giving a brief update of key trends.



NEED TO TALK TO US?

PC Chris Shelley | christopher.shelley@norfolk.police.uk | 07900 407106

Diesel and Heating Oil Thefts

Whilst the mild autumn has helped keep heating oil prices perhaps lower than some expected, the drop in temperatures we have seen in the last week could drive some criminals to start thinking about stealing this valuable commodity. Please carefully consider the security around your heating oil tanks.

Top tips:

Hide the location of the tank (consider plants/shrubs which could help disguise tank)

Fit your oil tank with a padlock or lockable filler cap

Secure the oil tank within a cage

Install lockable gates

Fit an electronic gauge, which can activate an alarm when the oil level drops

Fit security lights near to the oil tank location

Consider the use of PIR (infrared beam) alarms close to tank area

Fit CCTV cameras

All of the above tips should also be considered for those storing diesel on business sites, we continue to suffer from a rising number of diesel thefts from farms and businesses. As a matter of urgency, in these cases please review your security setups.

We are also appealing to anyone with information to come forward, it is likely due to the amount of diesel being stolen in these incidents that a large vehicle is involved with some sort of tank that will stand out when moving around at night.

Hare Coursing Update

The wet weather has potentially acted as a natural crime prevention method recently as it makes it difficult for the vehicles these criminals use to get on the fields. We do continue to see a few reports particularly in the west where the soil does drain a bit quicker and also an area which has lots of unmanaged tracks.

As always, any reports of hare coursing in action should be reported on 999 immediately. Any information that can be passed slow time can be emailed into us.

Cold Calling Offences

We continue to receive reports of people claiming to be police officers and requesting bank details/money. Can I please ask you consider discussing this issue with your family/friends especially anyone who could be considered vulnerable to this sort of scam. They can appear very convincing on the phone; it may be appropriate to print off one of the below images and place on phones/next to phones for anyone you consider at risk from this scam.

Should you require these in larger formats or easier to print styles, please do get in touch via email and I can send them across.



WhatsApp Group

The Operation Randall WhatsApp group is expanding. At present the group mainly consists of partner agencies, key landowners and administrators of other social media rural groups. I am currently looking at increasing the size of this group so if you meet one or more of the above criteria – work for a partner agency, key landowner or you administer another rural group on social media - or if you think you would benefit or be able to contribute in any way, I want to hear from you. You can contact me on email at christopher.shelley@norfolk.pnn.police.uk

Bird Flu and Blue Tongue Disease in Livestock

Some of you may have seen in the news in recent weeks the return (never really left) of Bird Flu mainly in commercial flocks in Scotland so far, we are yet to see an outbreak this season in Norfolk.

Anyone keeping poultry should by now be well aware of steps they can take to prevent their flock from becoming infected. It is essential that any captive birds are kept away from wild birds to prevent the spread especially as migratory birds move down from the north to East Anglia. The risk to humans from bird flu remains incredibly low but good bio security and steps to prevent the spread should be taken.

Sadly, to add to the worry of many livestock farmers this winter is the return of the bluetongue virus. It is a viral disease which is NOT contagious, there is no public health risk associated with bluetongue. It cannot be directly transmitted from animal to animal neither. It is spread by midges; they have to have ingested blood from an infected animal and go onto bite another animal to infect them. This disease had not been seen in the UK since 2007 until this year, it has an extremely high mortality rate in sheep and to a lesser extent in cattle.

One thing we can be thankful of given the time of year the amount of biting midges are incredibly low and the recent cold snap should really help suppress the disease. So far, the initial detection came in a single cow in Kent and APHA immediately setup a 10km Control Zone and enhanced surveillance/testing which announced this week 4 more positive tests in cattle within that zone. One of the problems with the disease circulating in cattle is it can remain active in the blood for several weeks, however APHA have announced there is no evidence the disease is currently circulating in our midge population – of course the risk may increase in the Spring/Summer should the winds blow midges from infected countries in Europe. There are some vaccines available for bluetongue which became popular in the late 2000's but the problem is they only cover certain strains and there are many, this current strain

BTV3 does not currently have a licenced vaccine.

Both bluetongue and bird flu are notifiable disease which mean if you suspect your animals are suffering or died unexpectedly from either disease you must immediately notify APHA on 03000 200 301 failure to do so is a criminal offence.

Appeal following fail to stop collision in Stradsett

Police are appealing for witnesses following a fail to stop collision in Stradsett.

The incident occurred at 5.14pm on Wednesday 29 November on the A1122 Downham Road, near to the Stradsett Crossroads. A dark coloured HGV collided with a white Honda motorcycle.

The motorcyclist was taken to Queen Elizabeth Hospital for treatment.

The driver of the HGV failed to stop at the scene.

Officers are keen to hear from anyone who may have witnessed the incident or who may have any relevant dashcam footage.

Anyone with any information is asked to get in touch via the following channels quoting reference NC-29112023-352:

Report online: <https://www.norfolk.police.uk/tell-us>

Email: peter.howlett@norfolk.police.uk

Phone: 101

Crimestoppers: Contact the independent charity Crimestoppers 100% anonymously on 0800 555 111, or via their online form: www.crimestoppers-uk.org



December in the Countryside

December is often a time for the countryside to 'rest' with many of our native plants in a plain looking state, and there's a lack of colour although this November has brought up some later colour than normal.

There are still the several berries hanging on for some of our birds and smaller mammals (outside my window there is a bundle of crab apples which the rabbits are thoroughly enjoying). There are only three species that truly hibernate in the UK those being bats, hedgehogs and the dormouse. Many other species will slow down during winter months but not truly hibernate, including many of our reptiles and insects. It's worth noting if you see a hedgehog out during winter months, especially during the day, it probably isn't well. Don't initially intervene, monitor and call a specialist like the RSPCA for advice.

Many of our winter migratory birds are now well settled in, one of our largest visitors the Pink-Footed Geese spend a lot of time on harvested sugar beet fields where they eat off the disposed tops. They start their journey south in September from Iceland/Greenland to Scotland before making their way down south to the sugar beet fields. You will often see large flocks around the A47 in Yarmouth which was a great sight to see.

In our gardens we can help our native birds. The tits, robins, blackbirds, and thrushes will really appreciate a few fat balls, seeds and other winter feed to keep them going through the cold mornings. Also consider building an insect hotel to nurture the bug life through the winter months, these can be anything from huge complex structures to a few logs piled together in a corner.

Farming could be seen as taking a small break through December but nothing could be further from the truth - if we finally get some dry weather there is still the possibility of getting some late winter cereal crops in behind harvested sugar beet which is being harvested

and transported to the factories on a daily basis across the Eastern region. Sadly, some of our autumn planted cereal crops like the winter barley is looking very 'poorly' in places with some significant discolouring, mainly caused by waterlogging and possible also the flushing of nutrients in the soil due to the amount of rain recently. The vegetables grown in the west of the county on the free draining black soils will be busy being harvested for our Christmas dinner including sprouts, parsnips, leeks, and cauliflowers, although there have sadly been some reports of these even being rotten through saturation. Winter months also provide an essential window for maintenance on anything from machinery and buildings to paths and ditches. The ditch network, which we all drive past daily, is not only essential to keeping the land healthy for cropping but also assists with removing run off water from our roads and 'concrete jungles' we have created over many years.

Livestock farms will be as busy as ever. Autumn calving will be well underway and most of our livestock will now be housed in more pleasant drier conditions, which require a daily refresh of summer sun with a fresh bale of hay and straw baled up in the summer needed.

Conclusion

Thank you for your continued support this past year. If we don't know what's going on then there is no chance that we can do something about it. We don't always get it right or come to the conclusion individuals may want over certain matters, but we do work hard as a small team in tackling all rural crime matters.

That just leaves me to wish you all a very merry Christmas and happy new year – look forward to seeing you all next year!

The police will never
ask you for cash or
your bank details.

STOP...
this is a scam!

THE
TRAP



Appeal after burglaries in west Norfolk

Police in west Norfolk are asking people to take extra care to lock doors and secure sheds, garages and outbuildings after several incidents in the past fortnight.

A house in Low Side in Upwell was targeted sometime during the day on Friday 1 December. The resident returned to find her home had been broken in to and offenders had taken cash and jewellery. (Crime Ref 36/84934/23)

On Saturday 25 November, between 11pm and midnight, an unknown male entered the back garden of a property on Vong Lane in Pott Row. He then opened an unlocked shed and stole tools worth £600. (Crime Ref 36/83762/223)

In Priory Lane in South Wootton, during the day on Saturday 2 November, someone smashed the glass of an outbuilding in a garden and subsequently stole copper pipes and a copper tank from outside. (Crime Ref 36/85216/23)

Sometime overnight between Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 November, an unknown person attempted to damage the door handle of a home on Millers Lane in Harpley but did not gain entry. (Crime Ref 36/85216/23)

They are not believed to be connected.

As the evenings are now darker earlier and we all get ready for the holiday season, it's worth taking a few extra minutes to think about home security. Here are some simple tips:

LOCK

Lock all doors and windows, removing the keys before

leaving the house.

Keep front doors locked even when you are at home, especially if you are in the back garden.

Use window limiters to allow air in instead of keeping windows fully open on upstairs windows that can be easily accessed by a flat roof.

Lock back gates using a sturdy lock

LIGHT

Dusk-to-dawn' sensor security lighting is a great way of making sure the front of your home or shed/outbuilding is well-lit.

Visible burglar alarms or doorbell cameras can make burglars think twice; get specialist advice and consult your insurance company.

HIDE

Keep your valuables, jewellery, cash, passport and deeds to your property in a safe.

Never leave spare keys in an open place. Hide away to prevent them being stolen.

Don't leave equipment and tools lying around that can be used by burglars to break into your home, such as hammers, shovels or gardening tools. Keep ladders locked away and out of sight.

If anyone has any information about the crimes above then please contact us quoting the relevant crime number

Report online: <https://www.norfolk.police.uk/tell-us>

Phone : 101

Crimestoppers: Contact the independent charity Crimestoppers 100% anonymously on 0800 555 111, or via their online form: www.crimestoppers-uk.org

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