



Issue 30 | December 2022

 @RuralCrimeNfk

Operation Randall

tackling rural crime
Newsletter

Introduction

Normally I'd start by saying I don't know where the month has gone, or it's been a busy month. This time, given this is the final newsletter of the year, I can safely say I have no idea where this past year has gone! The team has been incredibly busy.

We have dealt with a huge variety of jobs – everything from animal thefts to stolen GPS systems, escaped livestock or wildlife crime.

This month has been as busy as ever. At the beginning of the month, I was lucky enough to be invited to the NFU's AGM at Easton College. It was a great opportunity to engage with many members of the rural community. In relation to other matters, we have started to see a few more calls about hare coursing as well as an increase in tool and small machinery theft. We are encouraging people to take some steps to protect themselves, some crime prevention advice is provided below.

This month has also brought some much colder weather, reported theft of heating oil and we continue to see diesel stolen from farms or building compounds.

Livestock Worrying and Theft of Fencing Units

Last month has seen a few incidents around livestock farms, including another incident in which sheep were pinned into a corner of a field by a dog. Thankfully, this incident didn't result in any injuries but would have caused untold stress to the sheep involved.

It is essential that dogs are kept on leads around any livestock. This time of the year, the ewes are now pregnant with early lambs and will be heavily pregnant, and any stress on the ewe at this crucial time can have a significant impact on the ewe as well as her unborn lambs.

We have also seen several thefts of fencing units and the fencing batteries. Please make sure these are marked with your postcode, ideally, with an engraver or permanent marker.

Another great method is to paint them in a 'unique' colour again making them unattractive to sell on, same can be applied to the batteries.



NEED TO TALK TO US?

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

Pest Control and Traps

We are increasingly seeing traps set incorrectly and untargeted species caught. It is important that anyone using traps as part of their pest management arrangements are competent users, understand the legislation and do not set the trap that puts domesticated animals and untargeted species at risk of being killed or harmed. Also, if the traps are set incorrectly, they can cause suffering even to targeted species. All traps approved for use are designed to catch or kill immediately and not cause any suffering. If the trap is faulty, set incorrectly or not checked regularly then you also run the risk of prosecution.

For more information on traps and best practices visit: Home - The British Association for Shooting and Conservation <http://basc.org.uk>

If you have any concerns around any traps which you believe are not set correctly please email us at the Op Randall team: OperationRandall@norfolk.police.uk. Never touch any traps even if set correctly and legally as they can cause serious injuries if handled incorrectly.

Fuel Thefts

I'm pleased to tell you that we haven't seen an increase in the theft of heating oil, however we continue to urge people who use heating oil to make sure they secure their supply as best as they can as we move into the colder months.

Consider general security products such as CCTV (including mobile monitoring systems), lighting if the tank is overlooked, alarms and lock the yard/garden/shed that the tank is in.

When it comes to the tank itself, consider fitting alarms to alert you to a sudden drop in the level of oil or if the lock is tampered with. The use of PIR alarms

can be effective.

We are continuing to see a rise in red diesel thefts from farms including from the machines themselves. Please consider where you are leaving machines overnight...can they be stored in a secure building? Consider storing them near dwellings or where alarms can be fitted. Some aftermarket tractor alarms can be fitted and are effective.

Hare Coursing

Reports continue to be below well what we would expect this time of year. That said, in the last few weeks we have seen an increase in reports. We continue to urge anyone who suspects hare coursing to contact us on 999 if a crime is in progress or on 101 or via our website.

Last week, my colleague PC Lovelock seized a vehicle and 3 dogs and issued Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) to three individuals who decided to cross the border near Outwell. The CPWs are a powerful tool for us to use because if an individual receives a warning and is then caught behaving in a similar manner again, they can be served with a Community Protection Notice and then prosecuted for breaching those notices. These warnings and notices cover the 7 Eastern counties (Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Kent, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Hertfordshire) provides great scope to disrupt this criminality.

Hare coursing is not only cruel but causes huge disruption to rural communities with criminal damage and public order offences being committed.

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

Seals—Keep your distance

With summer now long gone, the nature around our coastline is changing. As part of Op Seabird, we spent summer educating people around ground nesting birds, and now that turns to the breeding seal colonies along our coast most notably at Horsey and Winterton. These are popular locations over the winter months for walkers and rightly so, but it is essential we protect our wildlife.

Many of the seals will spend considerable amounts of time on land with pups over the next couple of months. There are some key points to remember when visiting these wonderful creatures:

- Always follow signs/guidance at the site you visit (respect the volunteers)
- Never approach a seal and always keep 10 metres minimum away (no selfies!)
- Never touch a seal or seal pup (their bite is nasty and carries some very nasty bacteria)
- If you see a seal pup on its own, it is likely to be fine - mum is likely to be out fishing and it's not uncommon for pups to be left for lengthy periods of time. Do not approach or touch its mother.
- If you do have concerns for the welfare of a seal, please contact either the RSPCA (0300 123 4999) or the Friends of Horsey Seals (they also cover Winterton 07706 314514)
- Never allow dogs to get anywhere near, always keep them on a lead
- Leave the area as you found it, taking your litter home with you.

Metal Detecting and the Law

The hobby of metal detecting has boomed in popularity of late with plenty of publicity around high value archaeological finds. This means there are now thousands of detectorists around the country. It's important to remember that all land is owned, which means that you must ask permission of the landowner to detect on their land. If you do not get their permission, you are trespassing, which is a civil offence, but you are also going equipped to steal. If you then dig a hole, this could be considered criminal damage and then if you find something and do not give it to the landowner, this is theft.

Some land is registered as scheduled. This is typically land that contains a known archaeological site and it has been determined scheduled land in a bid to protect it. You would need a licence to detect on scheduled land and this is extremely unlikely unless you're part of an organised professional archaeological dig. Metal detecting on scheduled land is a separate offence and considered even more serious than on non-scheduled land.

We are working with estates and responsible metal detecting groups to increase awareness of the rules and will deal robustly with anyone found illegally detecting. It is important to remember the onus is on the metal detectorist to prove they have permission from the landowner to be detecting – I suggest written permission (a signed contract) in your pocket is best.

For more information or to report suspected illegal detecting, you can email PC Christopher Holmes. christopher.holmes2@norfolk.police.uk

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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. That said, you may have seen in the news that the signs of Spring have already started to show through due to the unseasonably mild winter we have had so far.

Outside my office window I can see the snowdrops already well grown (although not flowering) and I think these will be flowering earlier than normal. There is still the odd berry hanging on for some of our birds and smaller mammals (again outside my window there is a bundle of crab apples which the rabbits are thoroughly enjoying). There are only 3 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, I saw a field last week in the Brundall area full, 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 the soil doesn't become too saturated, 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.

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. 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.

Festive Wishes

All that is left to say now is thank you for all your support continued in the past year. I look forward to visiting, speaking to and working with many of you in 2023. I hope you all have a very happy and enjoyable festive period with all your loved ones.

Happy Christmas and Happy New Year!

Next month's newsletter may be a day or two later than normal due to public holidays.

Chris

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