

RURAL CRIME NOW



Latest trends

Are rural thieves becoming increasingly brazen?



Latest figures

In-depth analysis of crime statistics from across the countryside.



Latest insights

From the key people working to tackle crime in our rural communities.



NFU Mutual
INSURANCE | PENSIONS | INVESTMENTS

RURAL CRIME REPORT 2017



NFU Mutual is the UK's leading rural insurer. We provide cover to over 70% of farmers, and many thousands of rural businesses up and down the country. As a mutual, we're in business to support our members. So we have a keen interest in beating rural crime.

This annual rural crime report is based on claims data from more than 300 of our local branches. It offers a unique insight into the cost and impact of crime in the countryside.

In this report you'll find details of the UK regions worst hit by rural crime, information on emerging trends, and expert opinion on what needs to be done to protect farms and rural homes.



Widen your view

Discover what farmers and experts think about rural crime.

[YouTube.com/NFUMutualVideo](https://www.youtube.com/NFUMutualVideo)

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FIGHTING RURAL CRIME 2017



Richard Percy
Chairman, NFU Mutual

Like many fellow farmers I am all too aware of the deep anger, frustration and vulnerability felt when you become a victim of rural crime. In recent years we've had equipment stolen and diesel stolen from the farmyard, and as a result have spent a lot of time and money improving security.

Today rural crime covers a multitude of offences ranging from livestock rustling to fly-tipping, from machinery theft to hare coursing. It covers the whole scale of financial loss from hundreds of pounds to hundreds of thousands of pounds.

I think two things have happened over the last 20 years; we farmers have become an easier target for the criminals as our urban friends have become more security conscious and organised crime has become involved in the high-cost criminal activity of fly tipping and high value machinery theft.

Farmers affected by crime usually increase their security after the event. Those who are repeatedly affected end up with more security until they are left alone. As the main insurer of the countryside, we sometimes see crime move almost in waves across the country as criminals move to softer targets as security tightens in the areas where they have been active.

As a mutual with our members' interests at heart, we use our expertise, local agent network and good connections with rural organisations to fight rural crime. To date we have invested over £1m in support for schemes to tackle rural crime. I am pleased to be able to say that the results, detailed in this report, are encouraging.

However, rural crime will not go away. As my father used to say: "Locks only keep your friends out". Criminals will find ways round our security measures so we farmers need to be improving our security before the next event.

In this arms race, NFU Mutual will be regularly alerting members to emerging rural crime trends and working closely with police and farm machinery and security device manufacturers, both to make it hard for criminals to steal in the countryside and to help bring offenders to justice.



The cost of rural theft **fell by 4.3%** last year

But figures for early 2017 suggest it is rising again

A COUNTRYSIDE UNDER SIEGE

By Rural Affairs Specialist, Tim Price

Only a generation ago, rural theft rarely amounted to more than a set of spanners taken from a tractor toolbox or a lamb or two rustled from a flock.

Today it has become an organised crime involving determined gangs who stake out expensive tractors for export across the globe, steal hundreds of sheep, and relentlessly target the quad bikes that are a vital part of modern farming.

The rise in rural crime has come about due to two main factors. Social and economic change has seen the number of farms fall and close-knit communities collapse. And modern transport links now enable thieves to steal farm machinery and move it into mainland Europe in a matter of hours.

Countryside criminals are becoming more brazen, and our annual survey of attitudes indicates that many farmers now feel under siege. Across the country they're turning their farmyards into fortresses to protect their homes, families and property. Some are even turning their backs on farming altogether.

Our data has highlighted some emerging trends



Being watched or 'staked out' is the biggest concern for people living in the countryside



Ongoing livestock theft is raising concerns that stock is being stolen for slaughter and processing outside regulated abattoirs before illegally entering the food chain



Thieves are cloning the identities of large, expensive tractors to make them easier to sell and harder to detect



Small and older tractors are being targeted by organised gangs for export to developing countries



Since Land Rover ended production of its Defender, the iconic farm vehicle has become an even bigger target for thieves



VIEWS FROM THE FIELD



The impact on farmers

Minette Batters, Deputy President NFU

Even with Brexit looming I've been surprised that rural crime is the real issue NFU members want to talk about in the farmer meetings I attend.

Rural crimes severely impact farm businesses, and are often associated with intimidation and threats of violence. Many farms have experienced these crimes for generations, but NFU members are reporting a significant increase and are feeling more vulnerable.

This isn't small-scale criminal activity either. One NFU member came across 150 people and 50 vehicles hare coursing on his farm, and as NFU Mutual figures show, expensive farm machinery is often targeted by criminal gangs.

The NFU and NFU Mutual have good examples of working with the police and other organisations to address rural crime. Many of these are outlined in the NFU report "Combatting Rural Crime". But the report has also found there isn't yet a coordinated approach across the country.

So we're calling for action by the Government and the police to bring about a consistent approach to the scourge of rural crime.



Tackling Rural Crime in Northern Ireland

Barclay Bell, UFU President

Rural crime remains a big issue for farmers across Northern Ireland. Our land border with the Republic of Ireland makes it easier for criminals to escape. So farmers are often victims of organised criminal gangs targeting machinery and livestock.

An added frustration is the lenient sentences handed down by courts. This has prompted the UFU to press for a tougher approach. We want the judiciary to recognise that rural crime makes people feel vulnerable in their homes.

We continue to work with the police and the Department of Justice on initiatives including trailer marking, freeze-branding cattle, and recommending trackers to help recover stolen vehicles and machinery. But more needs to be done.

We recognise that police budgets are under pressure and the countryside is difficult to police. However we need more joined-up thinking, such as more cooperation and intelligence sharing between police districts and across the Irish border.

VIEWS FROM THE FIELD



A rural crime overview

Kreseda Smith, Doctoral Researcher, Harper Adams University

There have been some undeniable increases in certain rural crimes over the last 12 months. The Rural Security Research Group at Harper Adams University has noted more reports of hare coursing, as well as livestock theft and worrying across various parts of the country. Quad bike and machinery theft continues to be an issue - small and mid-sized tractors, and also older tractors that lack security are being stolen to feed the market for spares in places like sub-Saharan Africa and Brazil.

Fly tipping and illegal waste dumping have been noted as a massively increasing problem for farmers and land owners, often costing tens of thousands of pounds to clear up.

Horizon scanning suggests that emerging trends may include an increased vulnerability of crop protection products as the rate of sterling falls, and an increase in fuel theft as prices increase.

Farmers should also consider cyber security, as we anticipate a rise in online/email fraud targeting the farming community as we proceed through Brexit.



The policing perspective

Dave Jones, Chief Constable of North Yorkshire Police

Despite their resilience, the impact of crime on rural communities can be devastating to livelihoods and individuals. To ensure the police service can understand and address these issues, we must work with those who shape our rural communities.

North Yorkshire Police has recently taken on stewardship of the national Wildlife Crime and Rural Affairs portfolio. Earlier this year we held two large workshops with key rural stakeholders, including NFU, NFU Mutual, and a number of police forces from across England and Wales.

The views shared in these sessions will help us to understand exactly what rural communities need from their police, and will shape a National Rural Policing Strategy. Which will ultimately make a positive difference to those living in rural areas.

And things are already changing for rural communities. To tackle rural crime in North Yorkshire I have established the Rural Task Force, the largest of its kind in the UK.



My views and experience

Gareth Wyn Jones, Welsh Farmer and Blogger

I feel we are very fortunate in North Wales to have a Rural Crime Team who work very closely with the farming community. Rob Taylor and his team have great knowledge of rural networks, which is very important when it comes to tackling all kinds of issues, from sheep rustling and dog attacks on livestock to thefts of farm equipment and fuel.

A victim of a quad theft myself a few years ago, I feel the police worked exceptionally well with us to try and catch those involved.

I believe understanding the issues from all sides is key to beating rural crime. Fortunately now a lot less incidents are occurring because of the vigilance of farmers and the increased presence of the Rural Crime Team.



Scotland's Partnership Approach

Inspector Jane Donaldson, National Rural Crime Co-ordinator, Police Scotland

The Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC) is a multi-agency group that brings together Police Scotland, NFUS, NFU Mutual, Scottish Government and other key stakeholders to deliver a national rural crime strategy and provide a greater understanding of rural issues.

SPARC's current priority is to reduce theft of farm vehicles, fuel, tools and equipment, and to reduce the theft and worrying of livestock, across the length and breadth of Scotland.

My role is to help deliver SPARC's objectives by supporting police officers across the country, identifying crime trends, sharing good practice, and working with partners to reduce the impact of rural crime.

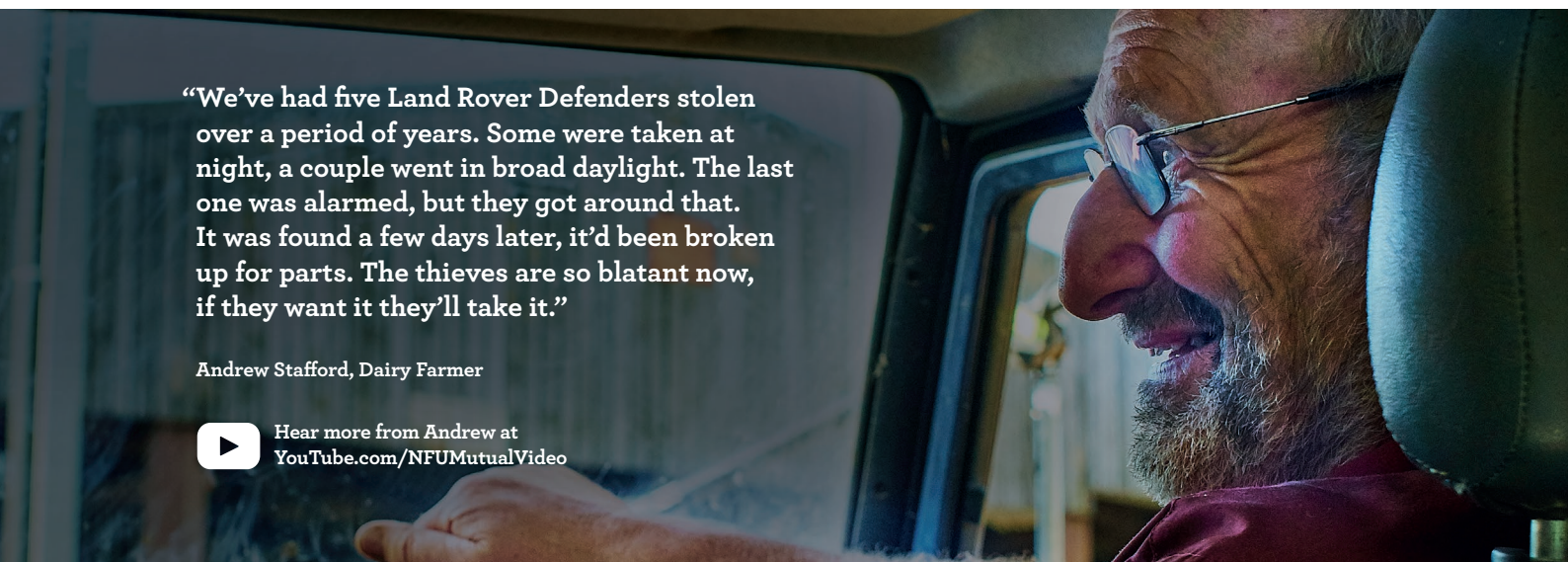
SPARC has achieved much in the last two years. We've provided CESAR training for police officers and funded a fitter to promote the scheme to Scottish dealers. We've launched a National Rural Watch alert scheme, run two annual livestock worrying campaigns a year, and worked to significantly reduce ATV and quad theft.

"We've had five Land Rover Defenders stolen over a period of years. Some were taken at night, a couple went in broad daylight. The last one was alarmed, but they got around that. It was found a few days later, it'd been broken up for parts. The thieves are so blatant now, if they want it they'll take it."

Andrew Stafford, Dairy Farmer



Hear more from Andrew at
[YouTube.com/NFUMutualVideo](https://www.youtube.com/NFUMutualVideo)



THE COST ACROSS THE COUNTRY



The worst hit region was the North East where rural crime cost

£7.3m

Last year rural crime cost the UK £39.2 million. Although that's down a little (4.3%) on the 2015 cost, initial figures for the first half of 2017 suggest the downward trend isn't going to last. The problem faced by our rural communities is still huge and widespread. The table below shows which areas were worst and least hit in 2016, and where the cost of rural crime has risen.

	Cost to UK 2015	Cost to UK 2016	% Change
East	£5.4M	£5.6M	3.7%
Midlands	£6.8M	£6.7M	-1.9%
N East	£6.7M	£7.3M	8.7%
N Ireland	£3.0M	£2.5M	-14.9%
N West	£3.6M	£2.8M	-24.4%
Scotland	£2.4M	£1.6M	-32.1%
S East	£6.4M	£5.9M	-8%
S West	£5.3M	£5.6M	5.6%
Wales	£1.5M	£1.3M	-7.5%
Cost to the UK	£41m	£39.2m	-4.3%

Based on NFU Mutual's 2016 claims statistics



“Livestock theft is an almost undetectable crime that can have a huge impact on farmers. In Cumbria, a small group of us started working closely with the police to educate them about sheep farming. We showed them how to handle the animals, how to identify them, and what to look for if they stopped any suspicious vehicles moving animals. As a result, livestock theft in the area is down 22%.”

Alan Alderson, Shepherd



Hear more from Alan at
[YouTube.com/NFUMutualVideo](https://www.youtube.com/NFUMutualVideo)





Worst affected counties by cost

	Cost to UK 2015	Cost to UK 2016	% Change
Lincolnshire	£2,378,822	£2,499,521	5.1%
Essex	£1,258,169	£1,814,548	44.2%
Cambridgeshire	£1,732,174	£1,609,305	-7.1%
Gloucestershire	£1,164,082	£1,607,368	38.1%
Kent	£1,636,792	£1,548,294	-5.4%
West Yorkshire	£1,155,542	£1,503,233	30.1%
Somerset	£1,336,180	£1,323,341	-1%
Lancashire	£2,116,695	£1,257,110	-40.6%
North Yorkshire	£1,069,446	£1,146,371	7.2%
Worcestershire	£827,139	£1,065,751	28.8%
Derbyshire	£766,482	£1,026,593	33.9%
Suffolk	£924,621	£976,021	5.6%
Norfolk	£989,992	£906,868	-8.4%
County Antrim	£882,826	£903,884	2.4%
Warwickshire	£741,783	£841,340	13.4%
South Yorkshire	£512,032	£786,865	53.7%
Cheshire	£599,722	£743,541	24%
Herefordshire	£716,164	£734,565	2.6%
Shropshire	£760,299	£717,454	-5.6%
Hampshire	£825,855	£707,224	-14.4%
Nottinghamshire	£927,610	£691,882	-25.4%
Leicestershire	£491,791	£653,017	32.8%
County Down	£727,394	£650,944	-10.5%
Staffordshire	£667,029	£638,024	-4.3%
Cumbria	£735,662	£614,387	-16.5%
Dorset	£548,321	£604,329	10.2%
Buckinghamshire	£594,649	£601,928	1.2%
Oxfordshire	£842,501	£583,227	-30.8%
Wiltshire	£689,602	£566,201	-17.9%
Northamptonshire	£545,437	£550,183	0.9%

Counties with costs over £500,000. Based on NFU Mutual's 2016 claims data


A CLOSER LOOK AT THE BIGGER PICTURE

Rural crime isn't the same in every part of the UK. Different regions experience different problems. For instance, tractor theft is most common in the eastern counties where there is more arable farming, while sheep rustling is on the decline everywhere except for Wales, where the cost has actually risen by £100,000.

	Cost to UK 2015	Cost to UK 2016	Up or down
	Agricultural vehicle theft		
	£5.4m	£5.4m	◀▶
	Land Rover Defender theft		
	£1.8m	£2.1m	▲
	ATV/Quad theft		
	£1.8m	£2.0m	▲
	Livestock theft		
	£2.9m	£2.2m	▼

Top ten targeted items nationally

	Item	Last year's position
1	Tools	3
2	ATV/Quad	1
3	Garden equipment	4
4	4x4s	7
5	Machinery	2
6	Livestock	5
7	Trailers and Horseboxes	8
8	Oil/Diesel	6
9	Equine	-
10	Tractors	10

A middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair and glasses is looking slightly off-camera. He is wearing a light blue and white checkered button-down shirt. His hands are clasped in front of him. The background is out of focus, showing what appears to be the side of a large vehicle, possibly a JCB telehandler, with corrugated metal siding and a large wheel.

“Our partnership with NaVCIS (National Vehicle Crime Intelligence Service) is proving effective. Recently a customer had a JCB telehandler taken from his farm in Leicestershire. The vehicle was CESAR marked and fitted with a tracking device. This assisted the police to recover this JCB the next day – in Hertfordshire in a truck bound for the docks. The covert CESAR markings confirmed the exact identity of this asset, enabling it to be released and returned to its owner almost immediately.”

Clive Harris, NFU Mutual Agricultural Vehicle Specialist



Hear more from Clive at
[YouTube.com/NFUMutualVideo](https://www.youtube.com/NFUMutualVideo)

WORKING TOGETHER TO BEAT RURAL CRIME



Rural crime causes deep anxiety and extra work for farmers, and it damages the trust of those who live and work in the countryside. For this reason, NFU Mutual supports a number of initiatives that bring together the police, farmers and rural organisations to combat the problem.

Since 2010 we've committed over £1m to the fight. And we're pleased to report that our investment is showing good results.

"The Eden Valley Countrywatch scheme is about bringing the community together to combat sheep theft and other rural crime in our area. One thing we've done is set up a local Facebook group. In many ways this has actually become the new eyes and ears of our community. Farmers use it to report stolen livestock, local people use it to report sightings of suspicious vehicles, and it gives the police a wider view of what's happening right across the area."

Amanda Wallbank, NFU Mutual Agent



Hear more from Amanda at
[YouTube.com/NFUMutualVideo](https://www.youtube.com/NFUMutualVideo)



Tractor theft

In 2010 NFU Mutual joined forces with the National Vehicle Crime Intelligence Service in an effort to reduce the levels of tractor theft. NFU Mutual also works with the Plant and Agricultural National Intelligence Unit. These partners share information and engage with police forces throughout the UK and the across the globe. Since their inception these partnerships have helped to reduce the cost of agricultural vehicle theft claims from more than £10m in 2010, to £5.4m in 2016.



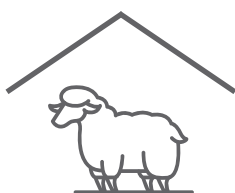
The Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC)

SPARC was formed in 2015 in response to the rising levels of tractor and quad thefts. NFU Mutual provides financial support, expertise and training to Police Scotland officers. Our claims statistics show that, in the two years since SPARC launched, the cost of tractor theft has fallen by 40%, and quad thefts have reduced by half.



Northern Ireland Rural Crime Partnership (RCP)

The RCP brings together a wide range of rural organisations – including Department of Justice, Crimestoppers, and NFU Mutual – to tackle rural and agricultural crime in the region. The RCP spearheads a number of public campaigns to encourage the reporting of rural crime across Northern Ireland.



Ewe Hostels

The brainchild of Lancashire farmer John Taylor, the Lancashire Livestock Initiative involves the NFU, NFU Mutual, the police, auction markets and a number of other rural organisations working together to identify and care for stolen livestock so they can be used as evidence in prosecutions. The scheme is now being rolled out in other counties under the name 'Ewe Hostels'.



Vehicle Security discounts

NFU Mutual offers discounts on agricultural vehicle policies of up to 27.5% for tractors and agricultural vehicles fitted with Thatcham approved security devices, including CESAR (Construction Equipment Security And Registration scheme), tracking devices and immobilisers.

IMPROVING RURAL SECURITY

By Rural Insurance Specialist, Rebecca Davidson

Good security is crucial to protecting your property. But as no two farms or rural businesses are the same, there's no standard, one-size-fits-all solution. However there is good practice.

To understand how attractive your property might look to a thief, simply go to the nearest road or footpath and look at it through their eyes. Are there any signs that security is good, like CCTV or gates? Are there many people about? Have vehicles and tools been locked away, or are they on show?

If you think you could benefit from better security, seek crime prevention advice from your local police force or ask NFU Mutual Risk Management Services Ltd for a consultation.

Security for your rural business or property falls into three main categories. It's a good idea to do as much 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



Widen your view

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Farm machinery and vehicle theft cost £5.4m in 2016.
Follow this simple checklist to help keep your farm vehicles safe.



Remove keys and lock cars

Don't make it easy for thieves, even if you only leave your vehicle for a minute.



Keep gates to yards closed

Open gates can be an open invitation to thieves. If the gate's unlocked, what else might be?



Fit CESAR marking systems

CESAR marking makes tractors, quads and other vehicles far less attractive to thieves.



Consider fitting immobilisers

Thieves target tractors with less security. But if they can't start it, they can't take it.



Have the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) etched on vehicle windows

Stealing your vehicles is less profitable if a thief has to replace all that glass.



Consider tracking devices

Fitting GPS trackers to more expensive vehicles and machinery means you'll always know where they are.



Physically secure ATVs

Heavy-duty security chains and padlocks will usually deter the opportunist.



Record machinery serial numbers

Providing serial numbers helps police and insurers recover stolen machines and bring criminals to justice.



Store equipment and vehicles out of sight

Equipment left in the yard, machinery left in fields - if it's in view, it's vulnerable.

It's just as important to protect yourself when buying used vehicles and machinery too. Never purchase a road-registered vehicle without registration documents, and make sure serial numbers and the VIN plate have not been tampered with. Also, check the vehicle's provenance against the HPI and CESAR register. Remember, if there's any outstanding finance on the vehicle, it's not the owner's to sell.



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