

Farm security

Purpose:

To promote good working practices that help ensure the security of farms and horticultural sites.

Why:

To help prevent criminal activity to farm businesses resulting in financial impact, disruption in productivity, and emotional stress on farm owners and staff.

TIAH Capability Framework area:

This aligns with the knowledge and skills in the Health and Safety area.

<https://tiah.org/tiah-capability-framework>

Talk leader instructions:

- Prepare to do the talk in a suitable/quiet location with no distractions
- Consider using some of the resources as part of the talk, e.g. showing a video
- Engage with participants, ask questions and give everyday examples
- Conclude with a brief review
- Get everyone to sign the form. Make sure to write the name of the farm and the date. Keep a copy in your Health and Safety records
- Ensure all participants have access to a copy of this document to refer to once the session has finished. This could be electronic and emailed or printed

Notes:

Background

Rural crime has seen a rise in recent years due to an increase in organised criminal gangs. A recent report from NFU Mutual estimates that the cost of rural crime increased by 4.3% in 2023, to £52.8m. Criminal gangs are targeting farmyards and fields looking to cash in on high inflation and ready resale markets domestically and overseas. The report also highlights a 9% rise in Quad and ATV theft which now totals £3.2m. Even more alarming is a staggering 137% increase in GPS theft, soaring to £4.2m.



Not only does rural crime have a financial impact on businesses and properties, but it can also have lasting mental health effects for victims. Arable farmer Jeremy Scott's container unit was broken into one evening in 2017. When he attempted to intervene, he was violently attacked by four criminals...

"I was afraid, yes. I wake up every night at 1:30am and don't go to sleep again until 4am."

Rural crime tends to fall into one or more of the below categories: Agricultural, equine, wildlife or heritage. If the farm you work on had been the target of machinery or fuel theft, but also hare coursing on the land, then this would be both agricultural and wildlife crime.

Reporting rural crime

According to a report from Dr Kate Tudor commissioned by the National Rural Crime Network (NRCN), 28% of victims fail to report their experience to the police.

To report a crime, inform your supervisor immediately and call the police on 101 if it's a non-emergency. You can also report rural and wildlife crime online by selecting your region and completing the online form via the link below:

<https://police.uk/pu/services-information/rural-and-wildlife-crime/report-rural-crime>

Main learning points



Tackling rural crime is a collaborative effort which involves farm owners, their staff, the rural community and the police, so it's important you work with your manager and teammates to help prevent criminal activity.

Q: What measures could you take to help with security?

Responses might include:

- Close and lock gates and buildings
- Remove keys from vehicles and store them in a safe, secure place
- Park farm machinery and vehicles out of sight. Ask your supervisor if there's a secure place you can park and lock up when not using a vehicle
- Don't leave high-value items such as GPS systems lying around. Ask your supervisor where these should be kept – Ideally in a lockable secure place
- If you work with livestock – inform your supervisor if you notice an animal isn't marked properly as they are also targeted by criminals

Notes:

Suggestions/ ideas:

- Listen out for livestock suddenly becoming spooked or making a noise – they are often an effective early warning

There are also measures that the farm owner or manager may have put in place already so it's good to be aware of these. These could include:

- Noting serial and chassis numbers
- Installing CCTV, security lighting and alarms
- CESAR marking, etching or marking the farm name and postcode onto kit
- Adding tracking devices and immobilisers onto kit
- PIN protecting GPS systems and applying manufacturers stickers
- Using mechanical immobilisers such as steering wheel or pedal locks on vehicles

Optional: Watch this NFU Mutual video on **5 farm security risks** (2.5 minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3k8sEjfj0m>

Discussion points 8 minutes

Criminals are always on the lookout for an 'easy win' and will often scope out properties before they attack.

Q: What might indicate that the farm you work on is being scoped out?

Responses might include:

- Vehicles that you don't recognise, parking or driving close to the farm premises. If you can, note down the make and model of the vehicle, and the registration number
- Drones flying in the area
- Someone on the farm you don't recognise – If you see someone that isn't familiar to you, call your supervisor immediately to check

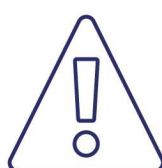
Q: Can you name what type of criminal activity might happen on a farm?

Responses might include:

- Theft of machinery or vehicles such as tractors, trucks, quad bikes, ATVs, telescopic handlers, diggers and other machinery
- Theft of horse boxes, trailers and tack
- Theft of high value tech equipment such as GPS systems and computers
- Fuel theft
- Theft or worrying of livestock and theft of livestock equipment
- Damage to property such as breaking windows and doors or ramraiding
- Damage to gates and fencing
- Wildlife crime such as hare coursing, poaching and offences against protected species
- Fly tipping



Remember: Always report anything suspicious that you see or hear to your supervisor or manager immediately as they may wish to take extra security measures or inform the police.



Important: For your own safety, you should never confront a criminal. They are often part of a gang and can be dangerous or carry weapons. Report the crime or suspicious activity immediately to the police and inform your supervisor.

The poster on the next page can be printed out and put on your notice board to remind your team of some top tips for farm security.

Top 10 tips for a secure farm



1 - Keep farmyard lights on to deter criminals

- Use durable low energy LEDs for cost-efficiency – Criminals don't like being seen!



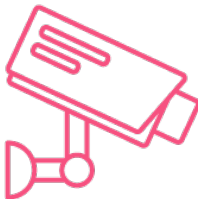
2 - Store vehicles securely

- Keep vehicles and machinery in locked buildings if possible. If this isn't possible, try to park them near CCTV cameras if available
- Never leave keys in vehicles and use immobilisers such as steering wheel/pedal locks if possible



3 - Trim vegetation around buildings

- Trimming bushes and trees makes it easier to spot unwanted visitors



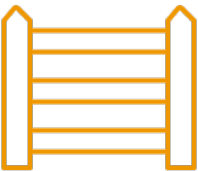
4 - Invest in CCTV and alarm systems

- Deter criminals and activists, and help with livestock monitoring



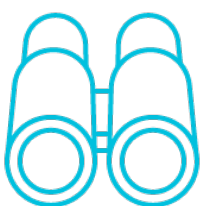
5 - Secure farm buildings and barns

- Ensure buildings and barns are secure and well-maintained. Check for weak points where criminals might enter



6 - Secure fencing and gates

- Lock gates when not in use and check fences regularly for damage



7 - Rural watch schemes

- Join or establish a local community watch network
- If one isn't available, you could set up a WhatsApp group with other farmers and the local community to keep up-to-date with any unwanted activity



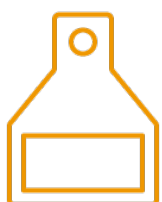
8 - Warning signs

- Installing warning signs at entrances and boundaries such as CCTV surveillance, rural crime watch schemes or even guard dogs can deter criminals



9 - Mark valuable items

- Keep and inventory. Use CEASAR marking and etching, and PIN-protect GPS systems



10 - Monitor livestock

- Ensure livestock are properly tagged and replace missing tags as soon as possible. Ensure fencing is maintained and secure, and gates are locked



Summary/Wrap-up

 1 minute

By always ensuring you follow best practices in farm security, you can help deter criminal activity on the farm you work on. This in turn will help prevent costly losses, vandalism, theft, downtime in productivity, and ultimately the safety of livestock and farm staff.

Resources:

- NFU Mutual: Rural Crime – Preventing Tractor Theft 2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzrS109mPCk>
- NFU Mutual: Rural Crime – Preventing Quad Theft 2022: www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WF68fQejzE
- NFU Mutual: Rural Crime – GPS Security 2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMccf5doKkE>
- NFU Mutual: Farm Security 2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQIRrWs7qSc>
- NFU Mutual: Rural Crime Report 2024: <https://www.nfumutual.co.uk/farming/rural-crime>
- National Rural Crime Network: <https://nationalruralcrimenetwork.net>
- National Rural Crime Network: Rural Crime: Serious, Organised and International (Report): <https://www.nationalruralcrimenetwork.net/rural-crime-report-2024>
- Real Agriculture (CA): Rural security: Ten tips for a safe farmyard: <https://realagriculture.com/2024/10/rural-security-101-ten-tips-for-a-safe-farmyard/>
- Agriland: The importance of reporting rural crime: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhGXvNtbD5U>
- NFU Mutual: How to improve farm security: <https://nfumutual.co.uk/news-and-stories/how-to-improve-farm-security/>
- NFU: Why CCTV is paramount for farm security: <https://nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/caught-on-camera-cctv-advice-for-dairy-and-livestock-farmers>

Toolbox Talk participants

Toolbox Talk: **Farm security**

Name of farmDate

Talk leader name.....

Name	Signature	Date