

Rural Crime Team NEWSLETTER

Spring 2023

Derbyshire Police Rural Crime Team Seasonal Round Up

Livestock Worrying – An ongoing problem

The issue of livestock worrying is an ongoing problem for farmers across the country. During 2022 Derbyshire Police recorded 116 cases in our county.

It's likely that the real number of instances is higher as often cases go unreported. Unfortunately, incidents of dogs attacking or chasing sheep seem to be on the increase despite campaigns and awareness raising and of course enforcement activity by police.

The very nature of our rural county means that cases are widespread and occur across the whole of Derbyshire. This makes it hard to target specific areas for prevention and means we need to rely on awareness raising, media and local signage.

Ultimately dog owners are responsible for the actions of their dogs and it's often the case that ignorance is the root cause. A common misconception quoted is 'My dog would never attack sheep' which repeatedly is proved wrong, causing suffering to livestock and of course financial loss to the farmer which can be significant depending upon the type of livestock.

**Farm livestock
in the area**

**Please keep
your dogs on
a lead and
under control**

101

in an emergency always call 999

www.derbyshire.police.uk

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Dales**



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 101 non-emergency, in an emergency always call 999

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The policing response

REPORT IT - Whether you are a farmer or other member of the public we would ask that if you witness any instance of dogs worrying livestock or dogs out of control around livestock that you report it to the police through the normal channels – 101, online reporting or 999 in an emergency. Remember that where possible we need the identity of the dog owners or their vehicle details so they can be traced if they leave the scene of the incident. Reporting at the time of the incident is always preferable. You can always refer back to the advice we offered in the Winter 2023 Newsletter about being a witness and reporting an incident to the police.

What to expect from the police -

RECORD - The policing response is always to record the incident and provide the victim with an incident or occurrence number. It should be noted however that livestock worrying is NOT a recordable offence relative to crime statistics. Always ask that the incident is brought to the attention of the Rural Crime Team.

INVESTIGATE – The Rural Crime Team will normally deal with reports of livestock worrying. All reports will be investigated thoroughly, and we will then take the appropriate action.

POSITIVE RESOLUTION – If a dog owner is identified, the investigating officer will work with the victim and the suspect to achieve a positive outcome. This is generally a Restorative Justice Resolution with compensation paid to the victim and a Voluntary Control Order issued to the dog owner.

Of course, there are cases which are more serious, or which are disputed, and these will proceed to a court case which can result in control or destruction orders for the dogs and fines.



Form 103
N4/22


Regional Dangerous Dogs Working Group

DOG - VOLUNTARY CONTROL ORDER (VCO)

This notice has been issued to you, being the owner/person responsible for the below dog. This has resulted from a complaint made to the Police regarding a dog being dangerously out of control in a public/private place contrary to a) Section 3 Dangerous Dogs Act 1981 or b) Section 2 Dogs Act 1871. Whilst this notice is not a criminal conviction, a record of this notice will be held on police information systems for a policing purpose and may be shared or disclosed to other organisations where there is a specific legal basis to do so. Should further information come to light suggesting a repeat of the below behaviour from the below mentioned dog(s); which you are responsible for, then further action may be taken by the Police. This could result in a court appearance where a control or destruction order of the dog can be made against you.

The Derbyshire Rural Crime Team operate what is called a Problem Management Plan on Livestock Worrying. The current problem management plan focusses on engagement, signage, use of media, partnership working and of course enforcement in various forms.

Engagement Events – Are intended to engage dog walkers to highlight the issues associated with Livestock Worrying and promote putting the dog on a lead where they are likely to encounter livestock.

Signage – The Rural Crime Team have invested in signage that is distributed to farmers for use at footpath crossing points on their land.

Media – The use of media and social media outlets are key to highlighting the problem. The Rural Crime Team are keen to engage with more mainstream media to broaden the target audience.

Partnership – We engage with other partners like the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the Peak District National Park Authority in order to address this issue.

Enforcement - An example of an enforcement outcome would be a recent case where a man from Dronfield was convicted at Chesterfield Magistrates Court of being the owner / person in charge of two dogs which were dangerously out of control (2 counts) and also being the person in charge of a dog worrying livestock (2 counts). He received a dog destruction order, a disqualification from owning dogs plus a £1500 compensation order and £85 court costs.

This case was of the more serious type and as discussed above many cases are dealt with by way of Restorative Justice Resolutions.

A final plea from us on behalf of the farming community. If you witness irresponsible dog ownership around livestock or dogs worrying or chasing livestock, please take the time to report it to the police. It is important that we all take some responsibility for what happens in our countryside – report it and we will do the rest.



The Countryside Code and Anti-Social Behaviour in the countryside.

The past few years have seen an increase in visitor numbers to the countryside and the Peak District National Park in particular. It's fair to say that the changes brought to all of our lives by the Covid-19 Pandemic have had an impact on the popularity of holidays abroad and the result has been increased numbers of people holidaying or day tripping into countryside areas. This inevitably puts pressure on our natural environment and our businesses, farms, communities and wildlife.

It's important therefore that we raise awareness on some of the basics to remember when visiting the countryside and national park area. We have covered dogs and livestock above, but there are of course other things to think about and to remember when visiting the countryside and we all have a part to play in preserving these special places for future generations.

Key points of the countryside code are:

Always keep dogs on a lead around livestock – especially sheep. Remember that farmers are within their rights to take measures (including shooting out of control dogs) to protect their animals.

Follow signs and use the official rights of way, make sure you understand the signs and symbols you might come across.

Leave all gates as you find them.

Never feed horses or other animals you meet on your walk, unless you have the owner's express permission. Many foods can cause harm to livestock and wildlife.

Drive carefully, and to the conditions of the road. Do not block access to farmland with your vehicle or park on narrow lanes. Agricultural vehicles and equipment can be wider than the average vehicle, and emergency vehicles need access 24/7.



Be aware of your surroundings - agricultural operations will still be running so look out for machinery or signage and follow instructions.

Of course, most people will be aware of the above and will routinely understand the need for the code and comply, but there are of course a minority who will not, whether through ignorance or unfamiliarity with how to behave or as to what is acceptable or unacceptable in our countryside and national park areas.

Once again, we will appeal to responsible countryside users to assist the police and local communities and of course the National Park Authority within its boundary, by reporting incidents of irresponsible or anti-social behaviour at the earliest opportunity.

Recent problems have included:

Fire safety - a big issue on our upland areas and the irresponsible use of barbecues can have catastrophic consequences on the environment and our wildlife. It also puts emergency responders at risk.

Litter and fly tipping – has a negative impact on the countryside environment and can present a danger to livestock and cause expensive disposal issues when on private land. This also includes irresponsible wild camping where groups abandon litter / tents and other paraphernalia for someone else to clear up.

Illegal and anti-social use of off-road motorcycles and quad bikes can also cause damage to sensitive or protected environments as well as causing a general nuisance to local communities and farms, damaging land, and having the potential to cause conflict with legitimate countryside users.

All of the previously discussed advice around witnessing and reporting incidents to the police apply. Remember - stay safe, and please help us by doing your bit in keeping the countryside safe.



Caravan, Motorhome and Trailer Thefts

The last few months has seen an increase in the theft of high value caravans and motorhomes, some of which have been from rural properties or farm storage sites. The thefts are often preceded by visits from individuals enquiring about the sale of such items.

Caravans and motorhomes aren't the only target however, with expensive horse / livestock trailers and farms trailers also being stolen. If you own a caravan, motorhome or trailer please consider your own security, both for the vehicle or trailer and the physical security at your address, farm or storage facility.

There are also excellent security products and schemes available, like CRIS for caravans and Datatag for Trailers / Plant, which will help to protect your property.

You could consider having a tracker type device installed. We appreciate this is an additional cost, but it can provide peace of mind and help in the recovery of your property in the event it is stolen.

We are asking the public to be vigilant, especially in rural areas. If you see unusual activity at isolated rural premises or caravan storage sites, particularly in the evening or at night, or you see suspicious vans or 4x4 towing vehicles please consider making a call to the police. If you see someone towing a caravan or driving an expensive motorhome that looks out of place it may be an indication that things aren't what they seem. We would rather have a false alarm with good intent than see another theft.



Agricultural GPS Thefts

Our neighbouring police forces and a number of other predominantly rural forces across the country have seen an increase in the theft of expensive detachable GPS systems used on farm machinery.

If you are a farm business and use such devices for arable farming, please consider your vehicle and GPS security.

So far instances in Derbyshire are minimal but it is happening on our border.

Finally....

The Rural Crime Team are dedicated to providing an effective policing service to tackle rural and wildlife crime in all its forms and to offer reassurance and advice to the rural community.

For more information or if you have any questions on any of the issues discussed in this newsletter, please don't hesitate to contact us.



Instagram – Derbyshire Rural Crime Team
Facebook – Derbyshire Rural Crime Team
Twitter @DerbyshireRCT
Email – DRCT@derbyshire.police.uk

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