



Operation Randall

tackling rural crime
Newsletter

Issue 42 | February 2024

 @RuralCrimeNfk

Introduction

Welcome! Another month rolls on by. The weather has again sent us the usual challenges with Storm Isha biting us hard recently. Whilst we weren't perhaps as affected as other parts of the country, we still saw a rise in the number of weather-related calls which keeps everyone busy. Thankfully, at the point of writing this, it has been somewhat drier. We can be thankful for this given the water levels at the beginning of the month.

As a team, we have been busy supporting our frontline colleagues where required, providing drone support and lots of planning has started for the summer months. We have also been busy finalising several case files which we should be able to bring you more detail on shortly, once they have been to court. Whilst this can be frustrating, we have to make sure those involved get a fair trial if necessary and allowing detailed information into public can interfere in that process. As soon as we can release full details, we will.

Livestock Worrying – Keep Your Eyes Peeled for Sheep in Trouble

This time of year is an essential period for our sheep farmers in the county. Many will already have concerns around the growing list of confirmed blue

tongue virus cases. This disease is a slightly unusual one for livestock farming, given it does not transmit animal to animal but by an infected midge biting an animal. When another variant of the virus was in the country in 2007, it caused significant deformities and other issues around lambing – many will be hoping this is not the case this time round.

Another issue that many will be worrying about is dogs getting into flocks and causing serious injury to the sheep themselves but also the worrying of such animals which can cause abortions. Please keep dogs on leads around any livestock to prevent any offences. You could be held criminally responsible for the behaviour of your dog!

Another little thing to keep your eyes out for at this time of year is 'cast' pregnant ewes. As the ewe is heavily pregnant and has full winter woollies on, she can end up with a rather flat back, making her vulnerable to getting stuck on her back. This creates a slow death for the ewe. If you see any like this, try to notify the farmer or slowly roll her back over. If you do this, she may be very wobbly on her feet initially depending on how long she has been on her back.



NEED TO TALK TO US?

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

Hare Coursing Update (OP Galileo)

The number of reports around hare course continue to be very low currently.

Eight men have been convicted of hare coursing in Norfolk under new legislation aimed at tackling the offence. It comes after two separate reports of hare coursing led to their arrests last year.

The first happened in the Walpole Highway area of Downham Market on 12 October 2023 when four men were arrested and three dogs seized.

Appearing at King's Lynn Magistrates Court on Thursday 25 January 2024, all four admitted to the offence of trespassing in pursuit of game and criminal damage to the field. They were each ordered to pay fines and costs and banned from keeping dogs for two years:

Mark Dean, 26, of Woodstock Lane South, Chessington was fined £250, ordered to pay £100 victim surcharge, £105 prosecution costs, £250 compensation for the damage to the field and £425 towards the cost of kennelling the dogs.

Henry Smith, 35, of Oveton Way, Leatherhead was fined £250, ordered to pay £100 victim surcharge, £105 prosecution costs, £250 compensation for the damage to the field and £425 towards the cost of kennelling the dogs.

Miley Smith, 28, of Fairbridge Way, Burgess Hill was fined £200, ordered to pay £80 victim surcharge, £105 prosecution costs, £250 compensation for the damage to the field and £425 towards the cost of kennelling the dogs.

Callum King, 28, of Lower Common, Eversley also pleaded guilty to an additional offence of driving without insurance during the same incident and was fined £416, ordered to pay £166 victim surcharge, £105 prosecution costs, £250 compensation for the damage to the field and £425 towards the cost of kennelling the dogs.

The court ordered the three dogs to be forfeited and these will now be rehomed.

The second incident was reported on 10 December 2023 around the Barroway Drove area of Downham Market where another four men were arrested and two dogs seized.

All four pleaded guilty to the offence of trespassing in pursuit of game at King's Lynn Magistrates Court on Thursday 25 January 2024. Their sentences are as follows: Jimmy Lee, 38, of Park Lane, Wokingham was fined £500, ordered to pay £200 victim surcharge, £105 prosecution costs, and £216 towards the cost of kennelling the dogs. Wayne Shelley, 50, of Wokingham Road, Crowthorne was fined £500, ordered to pay £200 victim surcharge, £105 prosecution costs, and £216 towards the cost of kennelling the dogs.

Edward Connors, 28, of Peeks Brook Lane, Horley was fined £500, ordered to pay £200 victim surcharge, £105 prosecution costs, and £216 towards the cost of kennelling the dogs.

Albert Eastwood, 28, of Denton Close, Redhill was fined £600, ordered to pay £240 victim surcharge, £105 prosecution costs, and £216 towards the cost of kennelling the dogs.

The court ordered the two dogs to be forfeited and these will now be rehomed. All eight were issued with a two-year court order banning them from owning or keeping dogs.

Under the new law introduced in 2022, those convicted of hare coursing, going equipped, or trespassing with intent to pursue hares, face unlimited fines and up to six months in prison.

Courts can also order costs towards kennelling paid for by police. These are the first sentences in Norfolk under the new legislation.

PC Chris Shelley from the OP Randall Rural Crime Team said: "Norfolk Constabulary will continue to tackle this cruel and illegal crime, it has no place in modern society and has been illegal in all forms for nearly 20 years now.

"As a force, we will continue to use the powers the new legislation introduced in 2022. We will do this by seizing dogs and seeking to recoup costs from individuals found guilty of such offences, alongside disqualification orders and compensating the victims of damage to their property."

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

Energiser Thefts – get them marked!

Over the last couple of weeks, we have seen a few livestock and horse paddock fencing units being stolen. Please make sure if you are using one of these that it is suitably marked up. Paint it an odd colour (bright pink!), scratch/engrave your surname or postcode into it and make it obvious it is marked. This makes them less attractive to steal as they are harder to move on.

Fuel Thefts

We continue to see a couple of large fuel thefts with often hundreds and even thousands of litres stolen at one time. These are often from building sites or similar. Please report any suspicious circumstance around such sites.

If you store large amounts of fuel on site, please review your security and check if it really is secure. Consider whether an alarm may be necessary. You can purchase alarms which notify you when there has been a large drop in fuel in a very short period of time.

Along the same lines, we have also seen whole fuel bowsers being stolen. Please look at whether they can be stored behind unmoveable objects/machines. Could a tracker be cleverly fitted? They are getting smaller and far more cost effective now.

Snowdrop Thefts

Thankfully it is that time of year where our roadsides, gardens and woods start to come alive again with fresh green shoots with the beautiful white snow drop on the end. Sadly, some people still believe these can be dug up and stolen. These are a wild plant and as such are protected. It is illegal to uproot any wild plant or take any plant from land without permission.

If you see persons doing such, please where possible take photos and vehicle details and report it to us. Please remember, it is not an offence to grow them in your garden or propagate them and sell them. Most sellers and garden centres are working well within the law.

Lovelock in the West

With the first local update of this kind, I would like to take a moment to introduce myself. Some of you may have already met me but for those that are yet to, I am PC 2061 Alex Lovelock. I am based at Downham Market Police Station as the Local Rural and Wildlife Crime Manager. I have a passion and interest for all things rural and that is reflected in my background. The West Norfolk area has seen an uneventful couple of months with only very occasional reports of hare coursing taking place. With this, I would still ask that you are vigilant when out and about and report all suspicious behaviour.

We have had some positive court results in the last couple weeks. In brief, two hare coursing incidents which took place in the Kings Lynn area were heard in court last week. They resulted in large fines and banning orders for those involved, along with the dogs and vehicles being confiscated.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your ongoing support, especially in the west on the county. I hope with these ongoing positive results your support remains in tackling rural and wildlife crime in the county of Norfolk.



In The Countryside in February

Livestock farms remain relatively quiet, or as quiet as they are ever going to be, with just the earlier lambing taking place. A farmer's day will be taken up by checking their stock regularly and making sure they have plenty of fodder and water available.

You may have seen flocks of sheep grazing green fields one day and then in 'mud' with white bulbs the next. These are stubble turnips and are a staple of sheep diets, in these parts, as they are very nutritional, affordable, and fast growing. The only problem is it looks a bit messy, but the sheep generally do well in these conditions. As long as they have food, they are happy. Of course, the farmer has to keep opening up the next piece of field every now and again, moving the fencing along. You don't want the sheep just trampling all over the whole field, as so much would be wasted. By strip grazing, you encourage them to waste less.

Cattle remain generally indoors in clean warm barns whilst the fields remain very waterlogged and of course the daily work to feed and clean them is no easy task.

Pigs never really get mention as they don't tend to have a season. We have some quite large pig herds in Norfolk, especially around the Breckland area. This is due to the free draining light soil, so the fields don't get as waterlogged. The majority of piglets are born outside before going on to be reared indoors, in barn conditions.

These are seen as much more favourable than some of the more intensive European standards and our pig farms are recognised worldwide as having some of the highest welfare standards. Did you know a female pig (sow) is pregnant for 3 months, 3 weeks and 3 days? A total of 115 days! The aim for pig farmers is for a sow to have on average 2.4 litters a year. In general, litters are on average around 10 piglets. Some of course can have a few more or less.

The shooting season has come to close on the 1st of February. Whilst some waterfowl can still be taken for the rest of this month, plans will be a foot now for

gamekeepers to prepare for next season.

A welcome sign that spring is just around the corner is the catkins hanging from the hazel trees long before any leaves appear. The visible catkins are actually the male flowers. The female flowers are very much hidden and look like tiny buds.

Should we get any stretch of warm days in a row, this could spark our common frogs into action, and you may start to see them spawning in ponds. Another sign, very much towards the end of February and beginning of March, is the primrose coming into flower. This woodland plant is often seen alongside bluebells in our forests and is traditionally classed as the first flower of the year. Of course, many commercial daffodils will also be popping through at the same time. We are now seeing them earlier and earlier in the supermarkets as they are often 'forced' to grow early to provide a longer season.

Another creature that has an important month ahead is the badger. Female badgers often give birth either in January or February. This is a very clever trick by nature, as by the time the cubs are venturing out looking for their own food of worms, insects and plants, spring will be well upon us and there will be plenty available. This gives them the best chance and longest period of time to fatten up over spring, summer and into autumn before food sources dry up next winter.

Conclusion

Thank you again for taking the time to read through.

There will not be a newsletter next month as I am away for a couple weeks, so will be back with a full update in April. As always follow us on social media to keep up to date.

The rest of the team will be here as normal so as always please don't hesitate to contact us.

PC Chris Shelley

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

STOP...
this is a scam!

THE
TRAP

