



NFU MUTUAL

Rural Crime Report 2025

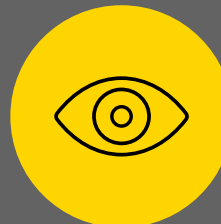
Start reading >



LATEST TRENDS
Working together to tackle organised crime



LATEST FIGURES
In-depth analysis of crime statistics from across the countryside



LATEST INSIGHTS
Opinions from the field



CONTENTS

- 03 Introduction
- 04 Tackling rural crime
- 06 Latest trends
- 09 Counting the cost of rural crime
- 13 Security
- 17 Views from the field



Over £400,000
invested by NFU Mutual
in 2024 to tackle rural
crime



16.5%
decrease in the estimated
cost of rural crime last
year, down to £44.1m



96%*
believed rural crime was
negatively impacting
farmers' mental wellbeing

*Survey of 115 NFU Mutual Agents



Jim McLaren – NFU Mutual Chairman

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO TACKLE RURAL CRIME

For over 20 years NFU Mutual has campaigned on the scourge of rural crime and the far-reaching impact it can have on farmers, their families and the wider rural community. We're proud to be a major funder of the National Rural Crime Unit (NRCU) and work collaboratively with them to share intelligence as well as reunite stolen goods with their rightful owners.

Aside from financial backing, we actively engage with the industry and contribute to efforts to strengthen existing legislation for a more effective response to rural crime. We are also members of the Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC) and the Rural Crime Partnership in Northern Ireland.

As a farmer, I know that theft of agricultural vehicles and livestock not only disrupts important farm work, impacting vital food production, but can cause severe distress and sleepless nights for farmers fearing those responsible could return.

While we can never be complacent, it's promising to see that the cost of claims related to this issue fell in 2024, as we continue to work with partners to combat rural crime. The ongoing threat from organised criminals

means that it's vital that farmers, their communities, and the industry continue to unite against this.

Of course, there can be no denying that 2024 was a difficult year for many farmers across the country as they dealt with the fall-out from events both domestically and overseas.

Set against this backdrop, and with the isolated nature of farming, it is all too easy for these challenges to overwhelm us, impacting our mental wellbeing. We're not always good at sharing our struggles, but it's crucial that we start talking more openly about them.

Talk to your neighbours who often face the same threats. Work with farm watch groups and your local rural police team. Reach out to the plethora of farming charities, such as the Farm Safety Foundation, Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI), Royal Scottish Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RSABI) or Farming Community Network (FCN), and access the support they offer. There's much truth in the saying 'a problem shared is a problem halved'.



Tackling
rural crime



Hannah Binns – Rural Affairs Specialist

STANDING TOGETHER AGAINST COUNTRYSIDE CRIME

As a mutual, we are here to support our members and their communities, and that goes beyond simply paying claims, it also includes taking an active hand in protecting the countryside against crime. We do this by sharing our knowledge and expertise, championing change, and providing insurance discounts for farmers who fit approved security devices to agricultural vehicles as well as financial support for bodies who make a tangible difference.

In 2024 we invested more than £400,000 in initiatives aimed at tackling rural crime and are proud to be a major funder of the National Rural Crime Unit (NRCU). In addition, last year we committed to fund the UK's first dedicated livestock theft officer within the unit until at least 2027/28 to help tackle the distressing theft of farm animals across the country.

Beyond financial contributions, NFU Mutual has a dedicated team that collaborates closely with the NRCU to share claims data and insights, identify at-risk areas, and analyse crime patterns to disrupt rural criminals and support recovery efforts. This partnership assisted the National Construction and Agricultural Theft Team, operating under the NRCU, in seizing and recovering

£4.4m worth of stolen agricultural vehicles and machinery last year.

The right legislation can also go a long way towards protecting the countryside, and we have been working with partners to support the development of strong laws.

NFU Mutual is delighted the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act is now due to be expanded, a move we have strongly supported, and we keenly await the Act coming into effect. We continue to work with industry bodies and push for similar legislation in Scotland to tackle cross-border crime and stop organised gangs in their tracks.

There are more ways legislation can help, which is why it's crucial a new bill giving police more powers to combat the financial and emotional impact of dog attacks on livestock receives support.





Latest
trends



Hannah Binns – Rural Affairs Specialist

LATEST TRENDS

In recent years we’ve seen rural crime becoming increasingly organised, serious and persistent in nature, with thieves willing to pull out all the stops to get what they desire, and sadly we saw that trend continue in 2024.

Although we must stay alert, it’s encouraging to see that the estimated cost of rural crime decreased by 16.5% year-on-year, to £44.1m, as we continued to collaborate with industry and law enforcement to tackle this urgent issue. But we know there is always work to be done when it comes to rural crime.

A survey of 115 NFU Mutual Agents, who are often embedded in the local communities they serve, found 92% believed rural crime was disrupting farming activities in their area and 86% knew farmers who had been repeat victims, leaving them feeling vulnerable in both their workplace and home.

Concerningly, 96% of those surveyed stated that rural crime was negatively affecting farmers’ mental wellbeing. Given the numerous challenges the industry already faces, it is imperative that farmers and their families speak up about any concerns they may have and seek support through charities like the Farm Safety Foundation.

Additionally, 83% felt that current legislation was insufficient to effectively disrupt rural crime activities, while others indicated a lack of policing resource to enforce laws.

Co-ordinated efforts from insurers, farmers, manufacturers, law enforcement, industry and politicians are crucial in delivering a unified response to the rural crime challenge posed by organised criminals and opportunistic thieves. United, we can confront rural crime with strength.



LATEST TRENDS

Agricultural vehicle and GPS theft

NFU Mutual is pleased to report our agricultural vehicle theft claims cost fell 35% to an estimated £7m in 2024. Global positioning system (GPS) units experienced the largest cost decline (following a spike in cost in 2023), down 71% to £1.2m, but remain attractive targets for thieves due to their high value and portability.

The estimated cost of tractor thefts reported to NFU Mutual saw a rise of 17% to £1.5m as criminals sought out machines and their parts. Likewise, trailer theft made a worrying resurgence, up 15% to £1.3m.

This underscores the importance of marking equipment and enhancing security measures to keep agricultural vehicles and machines secure and safe.



Quad bike and ATV theft

Theft of quad bikes and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) reported to NFU Mutual cost an estimated £2.7m, down 16% from 2023. Given the distinct characteristics of farmland, especially in upland areas, these vehicles are essential for farmers to navigate their fields and complete tasks efficiently, making their theft particularly disruptive, especially during busy seasons.

Unfortunately, the very advantages that quads and ATVs provide to farmers also make them prime targets for thieves, guaranteeing they remain high on criminals’ radar.

Livestock theft

Rearing farm animals requires months of careful planning, attention and hard work, so livestock theft is understandably a distressing experience for farmers, both financially and emotionally.

A crime that dates back centuries, it has followed the trend in rural crime to become highly organised, often involving 50 or more sheep taken in a single raid. In 2024, the estimated cost of livestock theft rose 3% to £3.4m.

These incidents not only have a devastating effect on farming businesses, from disrupting breeding lines to the additional stress of sourcing and

purchasing replacement animals, they can also be deeply upsetting for farmers and their families left worrying about the welfare of stolen farm animals.

Dog attacks on livestock

It is encouraging to see the estimated cost of livestock worrying fall by a quarter to almost £1.8m in 2024, following NFU Mutual campaigning alongside industry efforts to increase awareness among dog owners.

NFU Mutual’s latest survey of 1,136 dog owners found only two-fifths could always recall their dog, yet only 43% believed their dog was capable of causing the death or injury of farm animals.

Ignorance isn’t bliss when it comes to dog attacks on livestock; regardless of breed, size or temperament, all dogs are capable of chasing, injuring and killing farm animals. It is vital dog owners act responsibly and keep their dogs on leads wherever livestock may be nearby to prevent these needless attacks.

Pressing issues

NFU Mutual is aware of distressing accounts from farmers who have fallen victim to illegal and anti-social activities such as hare-coursing, trespassing, joyriding, and fly-tipping, and are

living in fear of further attacks and retaliation from organised criminals. Farmers don’t just work on their land, they live on it too, so these crimes, as with other types of rural crime, can be hugely distressing to the rural community. More must be done to prevent these incidents from occurring and protect farmers and their families.



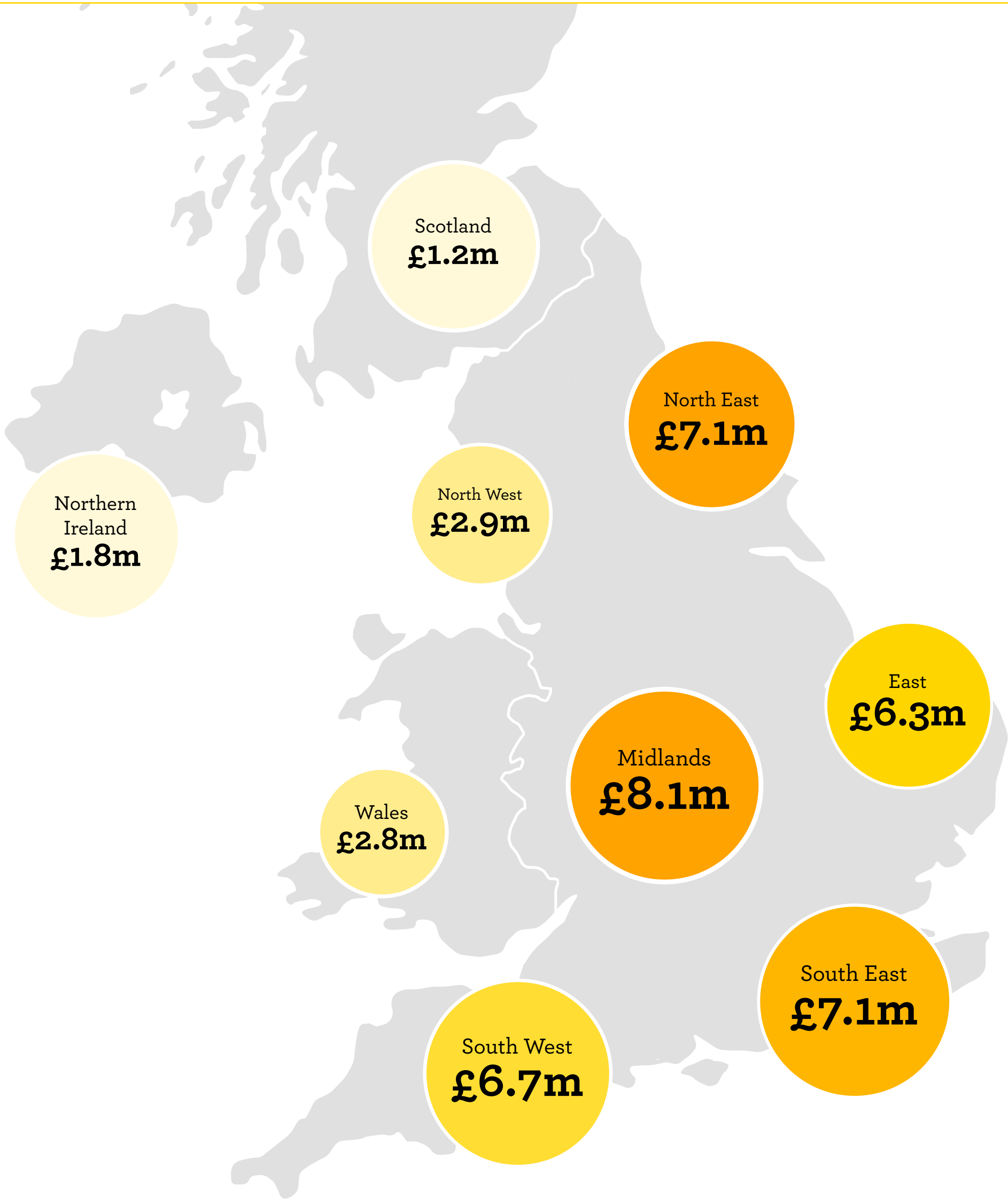
Counting the cost of

rural crime

COUNTING THE COST OF RURAL CRIME

Region or Country	2024 cost	2023 cost	% change from 2023
East	£6.3m	£7.1m	-11%
Midlands	£8.1m	£11.7m	-31%
North East	£7.1m	£8.6m	-17%
North West	£2.9m	£3.2m	-11%
Northern Ireland	£1.8m	£2m	-9%
Scotland	£1.2m	£1.8m	-33%
South East	£7.1m	£8.9m	-20%
South West	£6.7m	£7m	-4%
Wales	£2.8m	£2.4m	+18%
UK	£44.1m	£52.8m	-16.5%

Estimated costs based on NFU Mutual claims statistics, rounded to the nearest £100,000. Percentage changes are based on exact figures.



COUNTING THE COST OF RURAL CRIME

Based on NFU Mutual’s claim statistics, we estimate that rural crime in the UK cost £44.1m in 2024, down 16.5% on 2023.

Figures fluctuated across the UK, with Wales the only area to see a cost increase, up 18% to £2.8m. Northern Ireland and Scotland saw decreases, down 9% and 33% to £1.8m and £1.2m, respectively.

In England, the Midlands saw the largest decrease, falling 31% to £8.1m.



*Estimated claim costs to NFU Mutual

West Midlands farmer Daniel Pardoe found a trail of destruction and his telehandler missing while making his nightly check on the farm yard. Reviewing the farm’s CCTV later revealed four men in masks and balaclavas had stolen the loader just 30 minutes earlier.

“Unfortunately it’s not a rare tale these days – there had been a spate of farm machinery thefts in our area over a 10-day period when we were hit.

They had certainly done their homework using satellite maps, or maybe a drone to find where the Merlo was stored, as it’s quite a distance from the road and hidden from view behind 4m high earth banks.

Knowing the thieves had been through the yard in the night really knocked us back. My wife is now very nervous about going out after dark.

Daniel Pardoe
West Midlands farmer

Thieves staged a carefully-planned raid on Charlie Scrase Dickins’ West Sussex farm and vineyard to steal its all-terrain vehicle (ATV) under the cover of darkness.

“It was a planned raid without a doubt.

Someone had sussed the place out and knew where the ATV was kept, where the CCTV cameras were, and they had also worked out a route to get the Polaris off-site to a road where it could be loaded onto a vehicle.

All we got on the security recording were a few whistles. There was no sound of the ATV being started up, so they must have pushed it for a certain distance to get it away from view of the farmhouse before starting it up. They stole nothing else and even unloaded the carrier bay!

Charlie Scrase Dickins
West Sussex farmer



Rachel Hallos

NFU VICE-PRESIDENT

Rural crime continues to have a serious impact on farming families, from the financial cost of stolen equipment to the emotional distress caused by livestock attacks.

Thanks to years of dedicated NFU work, we’ve seen real progress – including the passing of the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act, hare coursing amendments in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill and the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Amendments Bill now moving through Parliament. But we still need to see swift implementation and enforcement to make a real difference on the ground.

It’s encouraging to see further funding for the National Rural Crime Unit, but we need long-term commitments to rural policing to ensure these crimes are taken seriously and tackled effectively.

This includes stronger commitments to cross-county border efforts, especially in cases of organised crime. We also need to empower local police forces with the tools and training they need to respond quickly to rural incidents.

Farmers want to feel safe in their homes, their businesses and out in the fields. These issues go far beyond lost income – they’re about protecting people, communities and the future of British farming.





Security

MEASURES TO PROTECT FARMS

Addressing rural crime requires a collaborative approach, and there are steps the rural community can take, alongside new legislation and police efforts, to strengthen their homes and businesses.

No two farms or rural businesses are the same, but there are some tried and tested measures proven to deter determined criminals.

Watch our videos to get insight on how you can protect your interests


 **Advice on tractor security** 

 **Advice on ATV security** 


 **Advice on farm security** 

 **Advice on GPS security** 


Here, NFU Mutual experts share their top tips for securing farm businesses:

**PHYSICAL**

- Close and lock all gates and consider entry and exit points
- Remove keys from vehicles and store them in a safe, secure place
- Park farm machinery and vehicles out of sight, preferably in a lockable building
- Lock away high-value items like GPS units
- Mark livestock and property
- Note serial and chassis numbers of items you own
- Animals can be effective early warning systems, with noise scaring criminals off

**TECHNICAL**

- Install CCTV, security lighting and alarms
- CESAR mark, etch or mark farm name and postcode onto kit
- Add tracking devices and immobilisers onto vehicles
- PIN protect GPS units and apply manufacturer stickers
- Use mechanical immobilisers such as steering wheel or pedal locks on vehicles

**SOCIAL**

- Report all crimes and suspicious activity to the police
- Join and participate in rural watch groups like Farm Watch scheme
- Use local WhatsApp groups for immediate updates on suspicious sightings
- Use the Crimestoppers number, 0800 555 111, to report rural crime anonymously

FRONT-LINE THOUGHTS



**Superintendent
Andrew Huddleston**
Head of The National
Rural Crime Unit

“ Thanks to the funding of NFU Mutual and The Construction Equipment Association (CEA) the NRCU has now been in place since January 2023. Working across the UK and into Europe over £22.5m worth of stolen machinery has been recovered and over 300 related arrests have been made. This included last year the excellent seven force operation co-ordinated by the NRCU that saw three men sent to prison for theft of Tractor GPS units, this absolutely would not have happened without the unit.

With the addition of the national livestock theft co-ordinator and financial investigator the unit has been able to support forces with not only specialist knowledge but also take proceeds of crime from offenders. This has included a £70,000 theft of cattle that was shown to be a fraud and the freezing of organised crime bank accounts and assets that now total over £4m.

Alongside the operational success of the unit the national co-ordinator is proving to be crucial in sharing of best practice between forces, improving intelligence sharing and the targeting of rural crime offenders. All this supports the huge success that is Rural Watch and communities working alongside police and partners to make our rural areas hostile to criminals.

”

**Detective Sergeant
Christopher Piggott**
Team Supervisor, NCATT
(National Construction
and Agricultural Theft
Team)

“ In 2024 the unit saw similar theft numbers to 2023, however the NCATT team seized and recovered £4.4m worth of stolen agricultural and construction vehicles and machinery last year, up from £3.1m in 2023. International recoveries also increased to £1.15m due to our information sharing agreement with Interpol.

Notable were successful arrests of an international organised crime gang targeting GPS units who were offending across the UK; they are now remanded into custody pending a court case. Thefts of these units have significantly dropped off since these arrests were made. The team were responsible for the arrests of 254 suspects in 2024 and continued to offer specialist training to police officers nationally in the identification of agricultural and construction equipment. In total 366 officers attended our joint training days with NFU Mutual, Combined Industries Theft Solutions (CITS) and other industry partners.

Quad thefts remained high throughout the winter months of 2024 and this trend continues into 2025. We are also continuing to push the Equipment Theft Prevention Act with the new government which aims to increase security of new sales of such equipment to combat these offences.

”

FRONT-LINE THOUGHTS



Martin Beck
NRCU's Livestock
Theft Co-ordinator

“ We have been collecting and analysing data to understand exactly how and what livestock theft crimes are happening which builds a picture of trends and behaviour. Detailed data allows enforcement to focus attention where these thefts are happening the most. Some counties suffered more thefts than others, with lambs being frequently stolen.

To support Operation Foldyard, the NRCU has produced guidance regarding recording and investigating allegations of livestock theft to police forces. We will continue to offer livestock investigation training to rural police officers to support their operational work.

We have also established strong relations with key partners including livestock enforcement agencies. There have been many investigations which have not been made public and several arrests made across the UK since Operation Foldyard commenced.

The importance of the public telling the police who is involved and what they are doing cannot be overstated, when it comes to confronting livestock theft.

”

Views from
the field

Views from the field



Stephanie Berkeley
Farm Safety Foundation
Manager

“ Burnout, depression, and crippling financial struggles are all too common in agriculture today. With rising production costs, shrinking subsidies, anxiety over government policies, and relentless weather challenges, farmers are under immense pressure.

Farming has always been one of the toughest industries, but now, the toll of long hours, isolation, and rural crime is pushing farms to the brink.

Our annual tracker research revealed that poor mental health among farmers and agricultural workers continues to be a major concern. In a sample of 750 farmers across the UK, nine out of 10 respondents (91%) agreed that poor mental health is the ‘biggest hidden problem’ facing the industry today. The resilience of our farmers is being tested like never before, and we can’t afford to ignore their fight.

Thankfully there is help out there; from rural support groups and farming charities across the country. If you are concerned about your own wellbeing or someone else you think may be struggling, please do not hesitate to reach out to one of these organisations, all of whose details can be found in our [Little Book of Minding Your Head](#). ”



Rhianna Montgomery
NFU Scotland Policy
Manager

“ NFU Scotland works closely with SPARC in protecting farmers and crofters in the fight against rural crime. Too many in this industry have either been victims themselves or know someone affected by theft, fraud or vandalism, bringing devastating financial, operational and mental impacts.

NFU Scotland, through its involvement in SPARC, is committed to addressing these concerns and reducing such crime. To help prevent thefts, we advise members to take key preventative actions such as regularly checking locks, installing CCTV and alarm systems, and using tracking devices on machinery and equipment. Additionally, the Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill has introduced measures to address the ongoing issue of fly-tipping on farm businesses, protecting landowners from liability.

We would welcome further support from government in the form of tighter legislation which would help to protect farmers and crofters from organised crime. ”

Views from the field



John McLenaghan
Ulster Farmers' Union
Deputy President

“According to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) update, agricultural crime represented less than 1% of all burglary, robbery and theft offences. But this does not tell the true story. Burglary and robbery represented 24% of agricultural crime, while theft represented 76%. Since 2010/11, burglary and robbery have represented between 23% and 36% of agricultural crime while theft has represented between 64% and 77%. These figures do not reflect the true impact of theft on a farm.

Such crime could involve machinery as much as hundreds of thousands of pounds. These items are not easily replaced, often made to order, and when not in operation, meaning that there could be a lengthy timescale for the arrival of a replacement, incurring a financial loss for the farm business.

”

Rob Taylor
UK Police NPCC lead for
livestock attacks

“Sadly, attacks on livestock by dogs are a frequent and distressing occurrence in the UK countryside. These attacks often result in animals being killed or severely injured at the time, or suffering miscarriages later on.

The police fully understand the profound impact such attacks have on our farming communities, as well as the distress it causes for the dogs and owners involved.

Despite years of campaigns, irresponsible dog owners have not been deterred. We are hopeful that a new, updated law will be passed through Parliament after years of research and focused work. This proposed law aims to protect more farmed animals not currently covered, allow for better police investigations, and improve court powers, such as owner banning orders following a conviction.

Addressing this issue is complex and cannot be solved easily. It requires a multifaceted approach to help reduce these terrible occurrences in our countryside.

”

THE UK'S LEADING RURAL INSURER

NFU Mutual offers a wide range of products, including general insurance, life, pensions, and investments. These products and services are delivered through our network of NFU Mutual agencies, as well as through our direct sales and service centres.

With more than 280 local agency offices located in rural towns and villages throughout the UK, NFU Mutual has become part of the fabric of rural life and remains committed to serving the needs of our members nationwide.

NFU Mutual is proud to deliver more than simply insurance. Making farming safer, supporting rural initiatives across the UK and helping to look after the environment are just some of the ways we support our communities.

Join in the conversation using #RuralCrime

 @nfum  nfu-mutual  NFU Mutual  nfu_mutual

Report Rural Crime

In an emergency always call 999, otherwise call 101.

Want to remain 100% anonymous? Contact the independent charity Crimestoppers online at crimestoppers-uk.org or by calling 0800 555 111.

To find out more about how we use your personal information and your rights, please go to nfumutual.co.uk/privacy

The National Farmers Union Mutual Insurance Society Limited (No.111982). Registered in England.

Registered Office: Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire CV37 7BJ.

REP-RUR-0825