

Rural crimebeat

Are the police doing enough to tackle rural crime? **Natalie Wallace** reports on the innovative approach of Thames Valley Police



Natalie Wallace

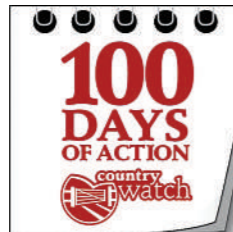
Natalie works in the Corporate Communications team at Thames Valley police in Oxfordshire

Thames Valley Police is taking rural crime very seriously, and to show its commitment to tackling the problem, it has launched a '100 days of action' initiative.

The policing project, which kicked off in the summer, highlights the work the force is doing to tackle the crimes of most concern to the farming community.

Each of the 10 rural Local Policing Areas is holding 10 days of operational and crime-prevention activities, five in the summer and five in the winter.

The main priorities are theft from, and of, agricultural machinery, break-ins at farm buildings and wildlife crime, such as hare coursing.



In order to ensure the success of the initiative, Thames Valley has joined forces with Datatag, the NFU and Dogwatch, among others, and

is working closely with the farming community to understand their main crime concerns.

Security marking company Datatag has been particularly crucial in the fight against agricultural machinery thefts. Throughout the 100 days of action, Datatag has committed its time and expert eye to patrolling off the beaten track and helping out with stop-check roadside operations.

Datatag's specialist knowledge about plant machinery and what to look out for on potential stolen vehicles has been invaluable. In fact, the 100 days of action



ADVICE: Police are passing on the crime prevention message to local farmers

teams have come across two stolen Ifor Williams trailers, both of which have been seized, and investigations have begun to find the rightful owners.

If you are a Thames Valley resident, the force is offering a discount on Datatag's CESAR security systems for agricultural machinery, plant, horse tack and saddle security kits. Residents need to call Datatag on 01784 778 310 to take advantage of the offer. And Countryside members can also now receive up to 20 per cent discount on Datatag products as part of a new affinity deal that starts this month.

Thanks to Datatag, neighbourhood officers have now been trained in horse tack security marking and have subsequently been able to hold local equine security events, inviting stable owners to bring along their bridles.

The Country Watch messaging system, also launched earlier this year and part of the 100 days, has been about establishing a continuing dialogue between police and rural residents. The force's crime prevention and reduction advisors have been visiting farms and carrying out farm security surveys and offering specific advice tailored to protecting individual farms and estates.

The 100 days of action has been welcomed by the farming community and, if it is a success, then perhaps a similar initiative could be taken up by police forces around the country. ✨



TAKE ACTION: Horse owners are being invited to equine security events



TVP's top 10 tips for preventing farm crime:

1 Talk to your employees about recognising suspicious activity and encourage them to report it straight away and let other farm workers know about it. If it turns out to be nothing, it doesn't matter!

2 Ensure emergency services can easily locate and identify your farm. Large reflective letters or numbers on a mailbox or gatepost can help police find you when they need to.

3 Powered sliding or hinged gates with remote or keypad control access can restrict access to property or land by unauthorised vehicles.

4 Signs that identify areas that are not open to public access can act as a reminder that unauthorised persons could be challenged.

5 Register valuable tools and property on the website: www.immobilise.com.

6 Remove obstructions and places of concealment near your buildings. Vegetation should not provide hiding places for offenders.

7 Consider identifying your land boundaries to police. When reports of animals straying on the highway are received, this information and correct contact details will help police with ownership of stray animals.

8 Consider protecting your fuel tank with a diesel level and theft alarm. These monitor levels of fuel in the tank and if it detects a sudden fall in levels, a loud, audible alarm sounds, warning the house.

9 Regularly remove unwanted scrap metal using an authorised, licensed dealer.

10 Consider using large tree trunks, rocks and ditching to protect unauthorised access points on to land. Keep ditches, fences and hedges maintained.



TAGGING: Thames Valley Police and Datatag have joined forces to promote rural security

DID YOU KNOW?

Countryside members can save up to 20% on Datatag products, visit: www.countrysideonline.co.uk for more information.

In your area

The rural policing areas involved in the 100 days of action are: Aylesbury, West Berkshire, South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse, West Oxfordshire and Cherwell, Wycombe, Chiltern and South Buckinghamshire, Bracknell Forest, Wokingham, Milton Keynes and Windsor and Maidenhead.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Follow Thames Valley Police's progress on the 100 days of action blog at: <http://tvp100daysofaction.blogspot.co.uk>
- Sign up to Country Watch at www.thamesvalleycountrywatch.co.uk