

Rural Matters



Rural policing in Kent – a magazine for residents and businesses

Winter 2021



In this issue:



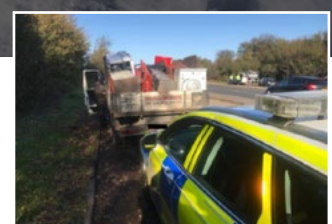
**Kent
Police**



Dog thefts – be aware



Hare coursing targeted





Illegal waste action

Plus the latest news on rural and environmental policing in Kent

Welcome to Rural Matters


Welcome to Rural Matters. See inside for the latest on the Kent Police Rural Task Force. There are now more officers countywide dedicated to tackling and preventing crime in the countryside. We've the latest news on how these officers, partners and colleagues are working to protect and support Kent's rural communities. Email your Rural Task Force team – rural.task.force@kent.police.uk

Team Leader

Inspector
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07800 675376

Rural Sergeant

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Darren Walshaw
07870 252185

North Division – 07528 989095

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- PC Nathan Southern
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Rural Crime Co-ordinator

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More rural contact information, see back page.

Report non-urgent crime online

-  Go to www.kent.police.uk/report
-  Report a crime, incident or non-injury collision in minutes
-  Receive your confirmation email and reference number immediately

To remain anonymous contact Kent Crimestoppers online or call **0800 555 111**.



Twitter account

Your Rural Task Force PCs have a Twitter account [@kentruralspolice](https://twitter.com/kentruralspolice)

The team regularly Tweets updates on what they've been doing and any live incidents.

Follow for the latest news and information.



Latest news

Control order for owner after four incidents of livestock attacks left animals dead and maimed

The owner of a dog which maimed and killed livestock has been issued with a control order following an investigation by Kent Police Rural Task Force.

Medway Magistrates Court heard the dog had been involved in four incidents of livestock worrying between 12 April and 5 August 2020 at two farms in Westerham. In one a sheep suffered an injury which needed £500 worth of veterinary treatment. On another occasion a goat was killed after being attacked, causing a fatal puncture wound to the neck.

Appearing at court on 8 December 2020, David Bravery, of Westerham Hill, Westerham, was convicted of four counts relating to his dog worrying livestock, an offence under the Protection of Livestock Act.

The control order means the dog must be on a lead at all times in public and prohibits the owner walking his dog on land where the attacks happened. He was ordered to pay compensation of £500 and £365 to each victim and £2,000 to cover court costs. Rural Task Force PC Nick Lingham, who investigated the case said: 'This dog was allowed to brutally attack a number of animals, causing them significant injury and distressing the owners who had to try and contain the dog while it was being aggressive. The man repeatedly behaved irresponsibly, failing to use a lead or a muzzle and admitted he was aware that his dog would attack animals. We will now monitor the situation to encourage him to adhere to the order and if he fails to do so, appropriate action will be taken which may



result in the destruction of his dog if it attacks again.'

Police are investigating a series of livestock attacks in the Edenbridge area involving a German Shepherd dog. In the latest incident five sheep were killed overnight in a field near to where the dog is kept. Charges have been now been authorised against the owner.

Protecting livestock – know the law

'Worrying' livestock is a crime under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953.

If you are on agricultural land and a dog you own or are in charge of **attacks or chases** livestock in a way that may cause **injury, suffering or loss**, you could be **prosecuted, fined and ordered to pay compensation**.

Under the Animals Act 1971, a person acting to **protect livestock** may be able to **kill or injure a dog**, without incurring any criminal or civil liability, if he or she believes it is worrying livestock.

Please keep your dog on a lead.

If you see a dog worrying livestock, please call the police on **999**.

 **Kent Police**
Protecting and serving the people of Kent

Cyber fraudsters target farmers – stay protected

Cyber criminals are becoming increasingly sophisticated and finding new ways to steal passwords, money or data – with farmers particularly targeted during the pandemic.

Official statistics show a rise in reports of cyber attacks against the farming community, such as spoof farm machinery adverts which leave farmers thousands of pounds out of pocket.

New Cyber Security for Farmers online guidance from the NFU and National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) aims to help provide the tools they need to protect themselves from common cyber attacks like phony adverts, scam emails and malicious software.

NFU deputy president Stuart Roberts said: 'Cyber attacks can be devastating for businesses and the individuals who are victims to fraudulent activity. It can affect agricultural businesses in a number of ways, including leaking of confidential data or financial losses. As farms rely more on technologies such as GPS, remote sensing and unmanned vehicles, the risks increase.'

The new NFU/NCSC guidance – available in full on the NCSC website – identifies the main digital aspects at risk on farms, from the computers farmers use to send their emails and run farm management software, to their automated machinery, security cameras and smartphones. Sarah Lyons, NCSC deputy director for economy and safety, said: 'Staying safe online might seem daunting, but the actionable advice in Cyber Security for Farmers will help the sector to stay as safe as possible while embracing the latest technology.'

The guidance also offers advice on password creation, spotting and dealing with scam emails, texts and phone calls, and details of where to go for help.

Top tips for improved cyber security

- Ensure computers and mobile phones are set to install automatic updates
- Replace old hardware, which may be more vulnerable to attack
- Back up your data – perhaps on an external hard drive or USB stick or a cloud-based option
- Switch on password protection and use fingerprint or face ID on mobile devices
- Use things like tracking modes and remote data erasing modes on mobile devices
- Download anti-virus products to protect from 'malware' (malicious software)
- Activate firewalls to create a buffer between your network and the internet

Targeting hare coursing – Rural Task Force seize drugs and poaching equipment

Ongoing action against those involved in hare coursing has seen Class A drugs and poaching equipment seized by officers from the Rural Task Force.

Proactive work by the team involves officers patrolling rural areas commonly targeted by those engaged in illegal hunting and poaching and communicating with local residents through the 'Farm Watch' app messaging service.

This enables members of the rural community to contact the officers directly so they can get to incidents quickly while communicating with the person reporting an incident.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'Op Galileo has been a key focus for the Rural Task Force with the hare coursing season at its peak leading into game poaching. We currently have court cases pending for poaching offences against some of Kent's main hare coursing offenders.'

During patrols in November the team stopped a Ford Focus after receiving reports of suspected hare coursing at a farm in Marden. The driver was found to be in possession of a white powder, believed to be Class A drugs. He was arrested and later cautioned with the offence.

On Boxing Day Rural Task Force officers were made aware that a group of men and dogs were suspected to be hare coursing in New Romney. They were found returning to their vehicles, and blocked by police when they attempted to leave.

Although unable to provide evidence to support poaching offences, 11 Covid Fixed Penalty Notices were issued for contravening group gathering rules in a Tier 4 area.

In another case a community protection warning was issued to a man who had been involved in five separate incidents of hare coursing between September and November. The warning prohibits the man from trespassing on land with dogs.

Sgt Walshaw said: 'Those involved in poaching and hare coursing cause significant harm to rural communities often damaging property and becoming aggressive if challenged. We remain committed to tackling this problem and working with local farmers and gamekeepers to gather information and put our resources where they will be most effective.'



Catapults seized and man arrested in Faversham – Farm Watch alert

Catapults and ball bearings were seized by Rural Task Force officers who responded to local farmers' concerns about poaching in Faversham. They were called after a suspected poacher was captured on CCTV on farmland in Stalisfield. They searched the area, stopping a Ford Mondeo in Throwley.

The officers seized catapults, ball bearings and fishing equipment and a man was arrested in connection with rogue trader offences in a neighbouring county. The incident was reported directly to the team via the Farm Watch app messaging group.

Fines for Covid-19 breaches after officers stop vehicles

Catapults, ball bearings and poaching equipment were seized and fines issued for Covid-19 breaches after officers from the Rural Task Force stopped two vehicles in Lenham.

Officers, supported by the Special Constabulary, were alerted to two suspicious vehicles reportedly poaching in the Scooks Hill area at around 8.50pm on Friday, 6 November 2020. The vehicles were traced to the A20 in Lenham and stopped. Lamps, catapults and ball bearings were seized and the four occupants, who were not from the same household, were issued with £200 fines for breaching Covid-19 regulations. Officers also investigated suspected

illegal poaching in Ryarsh, near West Malling. A vehicle was stopped, poaching equipment seized, and a cannabis warning issued along with Covid-19 fines for breaching the national lockdown.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'This is an unprecedented time for everyone and my officers are continuing to protect and support rural communities throughout the pandemic. While the vast majority of people respect the importance of adhering to the regulations, we will take appropriate action against those who show a blatant disregard for them.'

Keep contacting Farm Watch WhatsApp

Online messaging system Farm Watch WhatsApp is a countywide scheme for fast time sharing of information between the Rural Task Force and the community.

It has proved successful in recovering stolen property, vehicles and farm machinery and helping police deal with crime as it is reported. If anyone would like to join please email the team. rural.task.force@kent.police.uk

Farm Watch WhatsApp is a tool to share information directly with the team and not to be used to report crime. Any crimes should be reported in the usual way; **999** if a crime is in progress or **101** and online if non-urgent and don't forget the Country Eye App.

Fly tipping and illegal waste – action with partners targets offenders countywide

Fly tipping and illegal waste carrying were the focus of action by Rural Task Force officers working in collaboration with local councils.

They recently worked with both Ashford and Dover Councils on the same day to tackle offences in their areas.

'Stop-checks' were carried out on various vehicles to ensure drivers had the correct documentation and licences for legal waste removal. One vehicle carrying a large amount of scrap metal was stopped and the driver is now being dealt with by Dover Council for waste offences.

Another vehicle in the Broadstairs area full of scrap metal was subject to relevant checks and officers able to confirm the driver had the correct documentation and licenses.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: Working with our council partners we can ensure that waste is being carried legally and where it isn't, then take appropriate action.'

Officers stopped a White Ford Transit flatbed vehicle in the Faversham area finding several bags of waste, an old set of golf clubs and two heat lamps. The

driver was dealt with for no tax and MOT offences. Officers also carried out a Stop Check on a Ford Transit drop side truck full of 'green waste'. The driver had no waste carrier's licence or transfer notes and was issued with a £300 Fixed Penalty Notice by Medway Council Officers.

In another stop a Ford Transit truck loaded with scrap metal had no collector's licence and was subsequently reported by Medway Council.

On 4 December Rural Task Force officers worked alongside Maidstone Borough Council to combat fly-tipping with the Council Waste Team issuing a £300 fine for a driver with no waste transfer notices and several other drivers given advice regarding the carriage of waste. A second joint operation in Maidstone on 15 December targeting fly tipping and illegal movement of waste resulted in two vehicles being seized and five £300 Fixed Penalty Notices issued for waste carrier offences. In one incident the driver of a vehicle stopped in Maidstone picked up a machete and started smashing the windscreen when told it was being seized – he was arrested



for a Public Order offence and the vehicle was seized for waste carrier offences.

In the east of the county the Dover Council Waste Enforcement Team visited a site in Warden in relation to the reports of illegally tipping waste over the cliff edge into the sea. The investigation is continuing.

Op Traverse – fish poaching checks



Rural Task Force officers have been working in collaboration with the Environment Agency to tackle illegal fish poaching in Kent. They recently attended Lullingstone Castle as part of Op Traverse and carried out patrols of the lake, speaking

with the castle's bailiff. They also visited Orchard Place Fishing Farm with the EA Fisheries Team. Several checks were carried out and the EA issued four Fixed Penalty Notices to those fishing without holding a ROD licence.

Loose horses hit by car – keep animals safe

A number of incidents involving horses loose on the highway have been reported.

Two horses were hit by a car on 23 December in the Ashford area, with one needing to be put down because of its injuries.

Rural Task Force Inspector Dave Smith, said: 'This is a prime example of the risk posed to horses and motorists and why for the safety of all concerned, horses will be seized by Kent Police if found straying on the highway.'

'Horse owners need to be aware that there are costs associated to the return of a horse. I would urge that all those who have horses ensure they are securely kept and that the perimeter of fields and stables are regularly checked with any gates padlocked.'



Horse seizure policy

Seized horses are only in Kent Police's possession for 21 days maximum. Officers try to locate owners and put up posters. When owners come forward they are required to pay a fixed tariff. Any horse unclaimed after 21 days is rehomed.



Staying safe

Protect your equipment

To protect and help trace stolen equipment record all serial numbers, take photos and consider additional markings such as DNA solutions and tracker devices to help police in recovering property should it be stolen.

Farm machinery – keep it safe

Theft of machinery and other items from rural locations continues to be reported.

The Rural Task Force are reminding farmers, landowners and rural property owners to regularly review their security

- Ensure sheds/ barns are locked and thoroughly secure when not in use.
- Remember to record and mark all property serial numbers so these can be passed to the police if you become a victim of crime.

Keep land and buildings, secure

Land owners should check the perimeter and make sure boundaries are as secure as possible.

If possible, remove any access points that are no longer used and establish a single gated entrance and exit.

Consider installing an entry control system, such as an intercom or keypad entry.

Natural boundaries – thorny hedges or deep ditches – help restrict access by people or vehicles.

Use good quality padlocks with covers so they can't be cut off easily.

Warning to dog owners after pets stolen

The coronavirus pandemic has meant more time at home with canine companions but also a rise in dog thefts – with rural areas particularly vulnerable to thieves.

Charity DogLost said incidents of dog and puppy theft have been increasing, with the home and garden targeted to steal pets. The demand for dogs during lockdown has also been exploited by organised criminals as prices increase – with the number of thefts rising nationwide during the first lockdown last year.

In Kent dog owners were alerted following two reports of theft near Sevenoaks. At around midday on Thursday 10 December 2020, a Caucasian Shepherd, pictured, was stolen from a yard in Polhill, Halstead.

Later the same day, officers received a report that two cocker spaniels and a King Charles spaniel had been stolen from kennels at an address in Sevenoaks Road, Halstead. One of the cocker spaniels has since been recovered and reunited with its owner.

PC Martyn Tulk of the Community Policing Volunteer Canine team said: 'The loss of a pet will have a

devastating effect on the victim and our officers pursue all potential lines of enquiry to recover a dog. Kent Police has a dedicated team focused on researching and investigating dog thefts and providing enforcement and crime prevention advice. The team organises regular micro-chipping events and works with the charity DogLost to assist in reuniting animals with their owners.

'We recommend pet owners take every measure available to them to keep their animals safe. In addition to micro-chipping, home and garden security can also be considered including the use of good



quality CCTV and security lights to help keep thieves at bay.'

Anybody with information should contact Kent Police on 01622 604100, quoting reference 10-0914.

You can also call Crimestoppers anonymously, on 0800 555 111.

Keep your pets safe – simple steps

Kent Police has an established team dedicated to education and enforcement in relation to dogs. Part of the team's role is to help promote initiatives such as microchipping and to work with the charity DogLost to reunite missing or stolen dogs with their owners

The charity has urged dog owners to be vigilant and not leave their dogs unattended in public areas, as well as considering a number of simple steps to help protect their pet:

- **SAFE** – Secure your property and garden
- **SPOTTABLE** – Keep them in sight and trained to return
- **SEARCHABLE** – Know what steps to take if they go missing

Owners reunited with beloved stolen pet

A delighted couple have been reunited with their cockapoo Pippa. She disappeared from a garden of a property in Great Chart on 3 November 2020 and police recovered her from an address in Hawkhurst, where she was being kept in an outside kennel.

Checks uncovered a microchip which led to her being identified and just hours later officers were able to return her home. Inspector Pat Griffiths said: 'Pippa's elderly

owners were most distraught at her disappearance, especially in the current period of lockdown as she is a beloved pet and companion.

'We're delighted we have been able to return Pippa home safe and well and this shows the importance of microchipping your pets. It is not only a legal requirement, but it can be vital in helping us find and return lost and stolen pets to their rightful owners.' An investigation is ongoing.



West Kent church burglary – man in court

A man is due in court in relation to burglaries reported at two churches and a council office in West Kent.

In one at the Old Methodist church hall, High Street, Otford between 5-10 June 2020, a glass door was damaged and confectionary allegedly stolen.

At a break-in between 18-22 June at the offices of Riverhead parish council, Amherst Hill, Sevenoaks damage was caused to an internal door and cash taken. Five days a burglary was reported at St John's church hall in Hildenborough, where cash was stolen after cupboards were forced open.



A 44-year-old man from Treharris, Mid-Glamorgan, was interviewed on 25 September in connection with the incidents and on 10 December 2020 he was issued with a postal requisition to attend Sevenoaks Magistrates' Court on 22 March 2021 regarding three burglary charges.



Tracker leads to stolen plant recovery

Plant stolen from a building site in Ramsgate was recovered after the Rural Task Force were contacted by a tracking company regarding a tracker activation on the items.

As a result officers were able to recover all the plant from the burglary at the location indicated. Several other plant items were also seized for examination and identification.

Kent Resilience Forum



Flooding devastates communities

Could you help? Become a Flood Warden

Free virtual training
24 November
7pm - 9pm

'You can see the difference we make to people, knowing they can rely on you when they're in distress, knowing you're there to help.'
Carl, Tonbridge Flood Warden

The commitment

Training takes just 2 hours to complete

Flood Wardens meet a few times a year to test their flood plan

The role

Help local people prepare for flooding

Provide a vital link between your community and the emergency responders

What you'll get

Comprehensive handbook

Access to a whole host of resources

Support from fellow Flood Wardens



For more information on being a Flood Warden

Visit www.kentprepared.org.uk/flood-wardens

Can you help?

Appeal after 100 birds stolen – Ashford

Around 100 birds were stolen after an aviary was targeted near Ashford.

The birds, worth around £4,500 including canaries, redpolls, chaffinches and goldfinches were taken when the building was broken into between 2.20am and 2.50am on Friday 18 December 2020.

Anyone with information should call Kent Police on 01843 222289 quoting 46/222856/20.

Do you have information about a crime?

Calls to the independent charity Crimestoppers are anonymous. You can call **0800 555 111** or use the anonymous online form at **Crimestoppers-uk.org**

Police also work with Heritage Watch to protect the county's history.

www.heritagewatch.co.uk



Partnerships

Rural team working with partners to protect rural communities



The team use their expertise to support Local Neighbourhood Policing Teams, PCSOs or core response officers. The team are all fully trained Wildlife Crime Officers.

Countryside Code

Remember

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
- Guard against all risk of fire
- Leave all gates as you found them
- Keep pets under close control
- Keep to public paths across farmland
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone



Key partners working with Kent Police to keep rural communities safe

Crime Rural Advisory Group

CRAG formed in 2012, brings together main rural stakeholders, including the National Farmers Union and Country Land & Business Association – representing a large percentage of land occupancy countywide. They bring their own insights to CRAG to help keep Kent Police informed on ever-changing issues in rural Kent.

web: www.btfpartnership.co.uk

email: michael.bax@btfpartnership.co.uk

phone: **Michael Bax 01233 740077**

Kent Association of Local Councils

KALC is a not for profit membership organisation serving member parish and town councils and parish meetings in Kent and Medway. It offers training, advice and services to member councils. KALC works with rural officers to disseminate information on their behalf, and to gather crime information from towns and parishes.

web: www.kentalc.gov.uk

email: kalc@kentalc.gov.uk

phone: **01304 820173**

National Farmers Union

The NFU champions British farming and provides professional representation and services to its farmer and grower members. Around 70 per cent of full time farmers are NFU members. They aim to support Kent Police to engage with members' extensive local knowledge,

working in partnership with CRAG and other stake holder organisations.

web: www.nfuonline.com

email: isobel.bretherton@nfu.org.uk

phone: **01730 711950**

Kent Fire and Rescue Service

KFRS is responsible for delivering fire and rescue services to more than 1.7 million people. Each year fire officers deal with around 16,500 incidents including road crashes, house and barn fires and more than 2,400 non-fire rescues. KFRS works with the Kent Police, NFU, and CRAG to provide safety and risk reduction advice to support the agricultural business community.

web: www.kent.fire-uk.org

email: enquiries@kentfire-uk.org

phone: **01622 692121**

Historic England

Historic England is a public body which looks after England's historic environment. There are over 400,000 protected sites and buildings in England and Historic England works across a range of partnership to prevent the loss and damage to our shared cultural heritage. Former Kent police officer Mark Harrison advises the organisation and works closely with rural officers and CRAG.

web: www.historicengland.org.uk

email: southeast@HistoricEngland.org.uk

phone: **01483 252020**



Country Land & Business Association

The CLA is the membership organisation for owners of land, property and businesses in rural England and Wales and has been safeguarding the interests of landowners, and those with an economic, social and environmental interest in rural land for more than 112 years. The CLA South East Office works closely with the Kent Police to help achieve these aims.

web: www.cla.org.uk

email: southeast@cla.org.uk

phone: **01264 313434**