Welcome to Rural Matters...because it does

Welcome to the Rural Matters newsletter that will update you on the activities that have and will be taking place to tackle rural crime in rural Wokingham.

Over the last year we have been involved with trying to establish a better understanding of the rural areas of Wokingham and the specific needs of the communities that live and work here. The Wokingham local Policing area has established a Rural Specialist Police Officer, PC Laura Wright (2551). Having made a database of the rural and farming communities in the area we have a more accurate picture of where everyone is. Please do get in touch with us if you have not had a visit from us so that we can supply you with new Country Watch signs and any relevant security information that you may need. It is very important that we have all your up to date details as we realise that the most convenient way for most of you to receive information is via mobile phone as it is more than likely that you will be out and about on the farm. Likewise if there is anything that you have heard or seen you can alert the Police and we can send out the information.

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Rural Crime Action

We have a well established Rural Crime Action Group that is run by the Police with the Council and a collection of residents from the rural community, but we are always looking for new members. We meet every eight weeks to discuss the most pressing and damaging issues concerning people and work our way to solving some of the problems. If you are interested in coming along to the meetings please make contact with PCSO Carr who will take your details and inform you of the location and dates by calling 101.

Rural Operations

We hold an operation approx four times a year in various locations with all our partners in the Wokingham Borough Council Waste Services, Roads Policing, Hampshire Police, Trading Standards and Environment Agency. Our rural operations tackles the problem of fly tipping and waste carrying, stolen machinery and uninsured drivers. These highly visible operation sends out a clear message to the drivers that we stop and the passing motorists that see us. We hand out leaflets explaining ‘the purpose of our presence’ the operation has been well received and has led to some good intelligence.

We have had success in recovering stolen plant equipment, vehicles have been pursued and drivers apprehended for further investigation and suspicious people on farmland questioned.

A car fire was located by one of our local gamekeepers. Due to early notice we were able to prevent the fire from spreading and preserve vital forensic evidence.

Vehicle seen driving erratically

6 December (2015) was another fantastic evening for evidence gathering and we identified a vehicle that was acting suspiciously and driving erratically in the Swallowfield/Farley Hill area. We also came across a large group of young people in vehicles on the Riseley border that have caused many issues in the past with their anti social driving, known as drifting. They were dealt with accordingly as this behaviour will not be tolerated.
Plant

We still offer Cesar and Datatag with a discount for members of Thames Valley Police Country Watch which has been taken up by many farmers to tackle tractor and machinery theft is always a problem. CESAR combines 'State Of The Art' identification technology linked to a 24/7 secure and accredited database for Police enquiries. CESAR is supported by the Construction Equipment Association, the Agricultural Engineers Association, the Police, Thatcham and the Home Office. Registration of plant and agricultural vehicles with the scheme provides a visible deterrent against theft and an effective aid to Police in the identification and recovery of any item of plant which is stolen. Alongside these systems they now offer ATV, equestrian, and power tool marking products.

Many insurance providers offer generous security discounts when an approved Security device (CESAR registration / immobiliser / tracking system), is fitted to your agricultural vehicles. For further information: www.cesarscheme.org

Dangerous Dogs and Microchipping Legislation

Christmas Day 2015 was a rather sombre event for the Belcher family in Hurst. They suffered the loss of up to 40 sheep/lambs in a rather horrific attack most likely by dogs. 14 were found dead at the scene, seven found dead in the river and eight pulled alive from the river. Due to injuries received from the attack there were a number that have had to be put down. Even now, the farming family are finding lambs that are being stillborn due to the attack.

The pregnant ewes suffered injuries to the throat and the stomach area in what must have been an extremely painful ordeal.

We are calling for all dog owners to be vigilant if you are walking near to livestock then put your dog on a lead and respect the land of the farmer. Dog owners are ultimately responsible, if you are out walking and see dogs worrying any livestock then call the police on 101.

Further information can be found at: www.petlog.org.uk/pet-owners/microchip-with-a-petlog-vet/

. The 2016 Dog Microchipping Legislation

All change: The new law will make microchipping your dog compulsory. If you’re a dog owner, 2016 marks a change in how you register your pet.

It becomes the law this year for ALL dogs to be microchipped from April 2016. Every dog in England and Scotland will have to be microchipped in a move to help reunite people with lost or stolen pets and track down the owners of vicious or illegal dogs.

But what does this mean for you if you’re a dog owner? All dogs need to be chipped by the time they are eight weeks old. The fine is £500 for non compliance. Lost and stray dogs cost the taxpayer and welfare charities £33 million per year. A microchip makes it much easier to reunite a dog with its owner. Microchipping will reduce the burden on animal charities and local authorities and help protect the welfare of dogs by promoting responsible dog ownership. Postal workers and telecoms engineers are attacked by dogs every year on private property. Up until now they have not been covered by the law if they are bitten on private property. The Government has said householders will be protected from prosecution if their dog attacks a burglar or trespasser on their land.
Fly Grazing

If a horse is allowed to graze illegally or is abandoned on private or public land, this is known as “fly-grazing”. It is thought around 3,000 horses are illegally grazing in the UK. Illegal grazing can damage property and have a negative effect on a horse’s welfare.

Fly-grazed horses threaten the livelihood of farmers, damage land, divert local authority resources and risk the safety of motorists when they escape on to roads. This new legislation will enable farmers and landowners to remove unwanted horses quickly and effectively while action will be less expensive to take.

The Control of Horses Act 2015

Enables local authorities/owners and occupiers of land to deal with horses left on their land more quickly (after four working days as opposed to the previous 14 days) and provides more options for dealing with unclaimed horses including private sale, gifting them to a charity or humane euthanasia.

If members of the public are concerned about fly-grazed horses in their area, they are advised to contact their local council or the landowner. If you find a horse on your land whether you think it has been abandoned or is being fly-grazed you can report it to the police on 101. It is a civil rather than a criminal complaint and an incident number will be allocated. Keep a record of any costs.

Horse Watch

Thames Valley Horse Watch has just produced new signs and crime prevention folders so please get in touch if you need any. We are also keen to have your input and involvement in future events.

Every year horses and equine equipment worth hundreds of thousands of pounds are stolen across the Thames Valley and can’t be identified and returned to the rightful owners. We offer free tack marking with post codes.

HorseWatch Alliance: This website is designed to provide links to all other groups’ websites, information regarding stolen horses, ponies and trailers, security and identification information plus any other relevant information. If you would like a link to your group’s website please email tvhorsewatch@btinternet.com with details.

Please remember that whilst we are doing all we can to tackle rural crime and bring to justice those who commit the offences, we still need your help in the community to report any suspicious and unusual incidents or behaviours. Any information is good information and may well be the missing link to an ongoing investigation. You are our eyes and ears on the ground!

Horse Handling

November 2015 saw eight Wokingham police officers attend a horse handling course at the Home of Rest for Horses, Speen, Buckinghamshire. The course increased the knowledge and confidence of officers when dealing with horses loose on public roads. Officers learnt general horse handling and gained an in depth knowledge of horses in an agitated state. If anyone feels that they would benefit from a day up at the Horse Trust completing this training then please make contact with the Horse Trust directly: Slad Lane, Princes Risborough HP27 OPW

Fly Tipping

There are ‘teams of criminals’ in the area who will offer to get rid of your waste for cash. It is unlikely that they have the relevant licences to carry waste and will not generally offer a receipt for any money that you give them. You will then become the criminal if your waste is fly tipped and it is traced back to you. If you are approached by anyone suspicious or offered their services to remove your rubbish please report the incident. Please report any fly tipping that you see to the police and to Wokingham Borough Council. For more information: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wastecrime
In October PCSO Carr held her ever growing Emergency Services day at Arborfield Garrison. With over 3,000 visitors and incredible support from the local communities it was a massive success and a third date has already been planned for Thursday 27th October 2016 over the Autumn half term. We are hoping that in the spring we will be able to hold a Rural Matters show that will be packed with stall holders offering advice, the newest crime reduction products available on the market and loads more to entertain you throughout the day. Please do let us know if you would like to contribute, commit your time in joining a subcommittee to help organising such an event or have any suggestions. This would be run in much the same vein as the Emergency Services Day that I held last October at the Arborfield Garrison.

“This is better than Harry Potter’s car”

PCSO Suzie Carr helps youngsters at the Fun Day
The Wright way...

In May 2015 I joined Suzie in the fight against rural crime. I have thoroughly enjoyed getting out and about to meet as many of you as possible.

Although my first six months has involved meeting lots of you in your homes and farms, events and Rural Crime meetings, I have also been working away in the background to improve the intelligence from the rural community. I am keen to hear from you on how you feel we can help you and how we can help each other.

Rural crime is a wonderfully fascinating and yet secluded world and we can only be triumphant in the fight against those who want to take advantage of the large open spaces with your help.

If you spot something that doesn’t sit well with you or something that looks suspicious, pick up the phone and call 101 to report your concerns. Police would rather attend and prevent offences than react because you have suffered a loss at the hands of criminals or you became a victim of crime.

We are determined to make 2016 our best year yet in reducing the amount of crime suffered across our rural areas. We are going to hold more operations, crime preventions road shows bordering areas and importantly ensure local officers are well trained in the complexities surrounding rural legislation.

#Wrightandcarr on the road

We have been keen to ensure you are all aware of our whereabouts so that you can come and join us at events, whether to seek advice or get your tack or bike marked.

We have visited the Wokingham Pony Club and assessed their riding and road safety test, marked numerous pieces of tack and arranged to provide security assessments of private properties. We are available to visit any yard/farm and hold tack marking sessions or security events.

We held a Bike Marking Day in conjunction with Swallowfield Parish Council and Data tag, having families from near and far coming to have their bikes marked for free by the council wardens or for the more elite enthusiasts securing with the sophisticated products that Datatag offer.

For further information: www.datatag.co.uk

PC Laura Wright