

Toolbox Talk #4.7 – Protecting Livestock & Poultry



Livestock & Poultry Farming: a life-long investment – gone in minutes

Outline

The term 'livestock' encompasses domestic animals such as pigs, cattle, and sheep, kept primarily to produce meat, milk, and wool. Poultry refers to domesticated birds, including chickens, ducks, and turkeys, farmed for products such as meat, eggs, and feathers.

When grazing away from the farmyard, both livestock and poultry are exposed to heightened risks, including theft, deliberate poisoning, attacks from uncontrolled dogs, and unlawful interference by poachers or activists. Farm animals are afforded protection under a range of legislation, including offences specifically addressing livestock worrying. Nevertheless, farmers can significantly reduce their vulnerability to livestock-related crime by implementing the guidance outlined in this Toolbox Talk.

Why This Matters:

Protecting livestock and poultry from organised crime goes beyond theft reduction — it safeguards the entire farming operation, animal welfare, and public safety. Pedigree and high-value animals demand special protection because of their unique genetic and economic importance. Strong security isn't just about protection; it underpins welfare, profitability, biosecurity, and public confidence. It also demonstrates professionalism, ensures compliance, and helps keep farming viable and respected.



Let's Talk About It:

- What would be the impact to our business if our livestock or poultry were stolen or poisoned?
- How do we currently protect our animals?
- Who has the responsibility for locking up or checking animals at night?
- When do we think livestock and poultry are most at risk: think about their lifecycle on the farm, the seasonable events, or is the day and time relevant to predicting crime trends?
- What could we do better to protect livestock & poultry on our farm?

Quick Wins:

- 01 ● Be aware of seasonal crime trends and move stock away from vulnerable fields when regional events or festivals occur.
- 02 ● Design perimeter barriers — hedgerows, fencing, ditches, gates, and closed shackle padlocks — to reduce vehicle access into the field and keep them in good condition.
- 03 ● Mark and register your animals using ear-tags, freeze branding, RFID microchips, or tattoos. Track dominant animals and geo-fence fields to trigger unusual movement.
- 04 ● Conduct headcounts regularly and more frequently during high-risk periods.
- 05 ● Display clear signage denoting private property, pregnant animals, or the need to keep dogs under control.
- 06 ● Use social media to receive and give timely information – report all animal interference, trespass, or theft of livestock trailers immediately to the police.
- 07 ● Never approach intruders alone and always consider your personal safety.

Frank Cannon CSyP

Programme Director, RuralSafeGuard™



Visit Us

+44 (0)7742 569943

frank.cannon@ruralsafeguard.com

What does 'good' look like:

- 01 Secure places with strong physical barriers, control access, and install video or audible alarms to detect unusual behaviour or suspicious people and vehicles.
- 02 Individually identifiable animals, documented in a livestock register and regularly counted.



- 03 Robust preparedness, with a response plan that prioritises safety, avoids confrontation, and ensures prompt notification of police, insurers, and animal welfare stakeholders.
- 04 A behaviour-based programmes to build security knowledge and reduce complacency among family members and farm staff.



Disclaimer:

This document, prepared by Rural SafeGuard™, offers guidance to help reduce rural crime. It is for informational purposes only; Rural SafeGuard™ does not guarantee its accuracy or completeness and accepts no liability for any loss or damages resulting from its use. Users should exercise their own judgment and seek independent professional advice as needed.

Further Support: visit our Preferred Supplier or Partners Page on our Rural SafeGuard™ website.