



Bridging the Gap Between the Farm Gate and the Courtroom

A Simple Guide to Helping
Courts Understand the Real
Impact of Rural Crime



DETER, DETECT, DELAY RURAL CRIMINALS

There is a prevalent perception among farmers that convicted individuals responsible for rural crime often do not receive adequate penalties commensurate with the harm—both material and psychological—they inflict.



USE OF IMPACT STATEMENT BY VICTIMS OF RURAL CRIME



Farmers can positively influence this situation by contributing to magistrates' understanding through the submission of Victim Impact Statements

While some express scepticism regarding their effectiveness—citing past experiences where such statements appeared to have little effect or reporting crime yielded minimal results—it is crucial to persist.

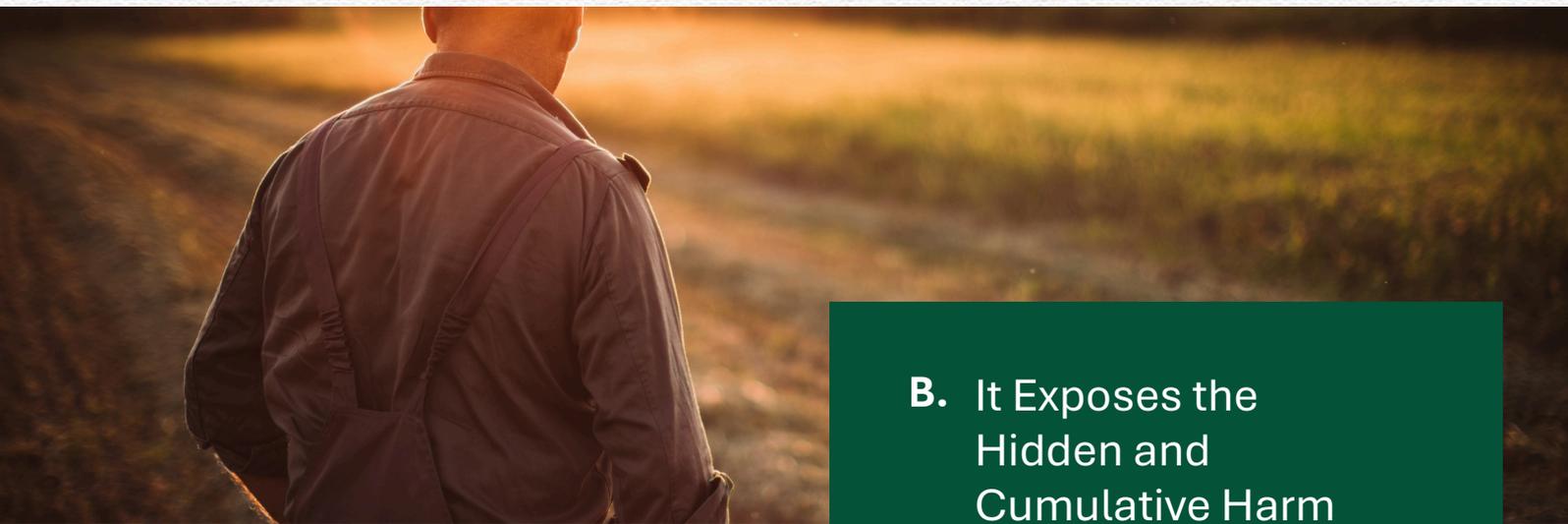
Raising awareness remains essential, as offenders often operate with impunity if rural crimes go unreported and unaddressed. Taking action through Impact Statements is a constructive step available to members of the farming community.

Farmers should overcome reluctance to express the psychological impact of recurring crimes. Offenders and organised groups will always use their impoverished backgrounds or minority status as mitigating factors to sway magistrates. Rural victims must leverage all available resources to secure justice.

This guide explains to farmers and rural crime victims how Impact Statements help magistrates understand the effects of rural crime on agricultural communities.

Why It Is Especially Valuable in Rural and Agricultural Contexts

Rural crime — such as machinery theft, livestock rustling, fuel theft, fly-tipping, hare coursing, or criminal damage — has unique characteristics that make Impact Statements especially important:



A. It Highlights the Disproportionate Impact on Victims

- Many rural crimes affect family-run farms or smallholdings where margins are tight, and insurance may not cover losses.
- Theft of a quad bike or GPS unit can cripple daily operations and cause cascading delays during critical seasons (e.g. planting or harvest).
- Livestock theft or injury can have emotional as well as financial consequences, especially where animals are reared by hand.

Without an Impact Statement, magistrates might see these as minor property crimes, rather than as acts that threaten an entire livelihood.

B. It Exposes the Hidden and Cumulative Harm

Repeated rural offending causes chronic stress, fear, and isolation within small communities

Victims often feel unprotected or forgotten due to distance from emergency services and extended response times.

Rural crime can undermine trust and community spirit, discouraging young people from staying in farming.

Impact Statements allow these broader community effects to be made visible to the court.

C. It Demonstrates Wider Economic and Environmental Impact



01

Damage to land, fencing, or water systems affects not just the farmer, but also food production, biodiversity, and animal welfare.

02

The cost of crime reduction measures (cameras, GPS tracking, security gates) diverts funds from investment in sustainable farming.

03

Local businesses — feed suppliers, contractors, markets — are also indirectly affected when farming activities slow or stop.

This helps magistrates appreciate that rural crime has regional and national implications, not just local ones.

D. It Demonstrates Wider Economic and Environmental Impact



Placing the offence in a higher harm category under sentencing guidelines.



Recognising aggravating factors such as planning, targeting of vulnerable victims, possessing equipment or dogs to perpetrate the offence, or causing community-wide disruption, fear, or intimidation.



Balancing punishment with deterrence, given that rural crime is vehicle enabled and often involves organised or repeat offending.

E. It Gives Voice to a Community Often Underrepresented

Farmers and rural residents frequently feel overlooked in the justice system. An Impact Statement — whether from the National Farmers' Union (NFU), Country Land & Business Association (CLA), a Rural Crime Partnership, or an individual farmer — ensures their collective experience and vulnerability are acknowledged in court.



Example Summary for Magistrates

The value of an Impact Statement in cases of rural crime lies in helping magistrates understand that offences against the farming and agricultural community are not isolated incidents of theft or damage, but attacks on livelihoods, food production, and the social fabric of rural life. These statements make visible the full extent of harm — financial, emotional, environmental, and community-wide — allowing the court to impose sentences that are properly informed, proportionate, and effective in protecting rural communities.

Optional Example of How It Might Be Worded (Excerpt)

This incident has caused significant disruption to farm operations. The stolen machinery was essential to harvesting, resulting in delays and lost income. Beyond the financial impact, this has caused distress to my family and staff, who now feel unsafe working in isolated areas. Repeated rural offences like this are eroding confidence within the farming community and increasing costs at a time when margins are already extremely tight.”

In summary: An Impact Statement in rural crime cases gives magistrates:

01

Context

Understanding that the crime affects more than property.

02

Scale

Insight into the ripple effects on rural economies and communities.

03

Balance

Enabling fair, informed sentencing that recognises the seriousness of harm beyond monetary loss.

SEMI-FORMAL VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT



Here's a sample Victim Impact Statement written in a realistic format and tone suitable for presentation to a magistrates' court.

This example focuses on hare coursing and its impact on a farmer, showing the full range of harm — physical, financial, emotional, and community-wide — that magistrates must consider in sentencing.

Victim Impact Statement

Name: Claud Greengrass

Occupation: Arable and Livestock Farmer

Location: Target Farm, Wiltshire

Date: 11 October 2025



Summary of Incident

On Friday 10th October 2025, a group of individuals entered my farmland without permission to engage in hare coursing. In doing so, they forced open gates, drove vehicles across planted fields, and cut through boundary fences. The damage allowed several sheep to escape onto the A303 — a busy main road — creating a serious risk to motorists and livestock.

Police and local volunteers assisted in recovering the animals, but the event caused significant disruption, financial loss, and distress to me and my family.



Physical and Financial Impact



Fencing and gates

Several lengths of stock fencing were destroyed, and two metal gates were broken off their hinges. Repairs cost over £2,000, not including my labour.



Crops

Vehicle ruts (soil compression) and tyre damage ruined approximately 3 acres of winter wheat, resulting in further losses of around £7,000.



Livestock:

Three sheep were injured during the escape, and one had to be put down due to a broken leg.



Time and resources:

I lost two full working days managing the repairs and recovery of stock, delaying other essential tasks during a busy season.



Vehicle disposal:

two vehicles were crashed and abandoned on my land that caused me to host the police on two occasions, support the arrival of the vehicle recovery crew, and then clean up the environmental spill caused by an oil leak.

For a small family-run farm, these losses are considerable and immediate.



Emotional and Psychological Impact

This incident has left me and my family feeling angry, anxious, and unsafe on our own land.

We live in a rural area where police response can take time, and it is frightening to confront groups arriving at night in fast moving vehicles with dogs, lights, and catapults.

Since this incident, I have struggled to sleep properly and now feel nervous whenever dogs or strange vehicles appear near the farm. My wife and children no longer feel comfortable walking across the fields alone.

Hare coursing has become a repeated problem, and we feel targeted and powerless to stop it.

Impact on the Wider Community

These crimes don't just affect me. Neighbouring farms have had similar experiences, and each incident adds to the feeling that rural crime isn't taken seriously.

The escape of livestock onto the A-road could easily have caused a serious road traffic collision, endangering the public as well as my animals.

Residents now avoid using the bridleways near the farm because of fear of coursers returning.

Repeat occurrences with little consequence to those who offend causes rural communities to lose faith in the criminal justice system and distrust in the county police services. A lack of response leads to a lack of reporting of incidents.

Ongoing Consequences

We've had to spend additional money on specialist advice from private security consultants, leading to -



- Installing stronger barriers, gates, and locks.
- Surveillance cameras, intruder alarms, and lighting.
- Digging ditches and reinforced fencing along road boundaries.
- Training and education for my family and staff to create a security culture.

This security expense — over £25,000 so far — takes funds away from maintaining our business and supporting our family's livelihood.

Conclusion

This was not a victimless crime. Hare coursing has caused financial loss, emotional distress, safety risks, and ongoing fear within our farming community.

I want the court to understand that this type of offending goes far beyond trespass or property damage — it threatens rural livelihoods, animal welfare, and public safety.

We live in fear of vindictive reprisal attacks if we approach or challenge hare coursers; they use foul and abusive language, they threaten us with violence, and they are known to return to our farms to steal, damage, or set fire to our property or buildings.

As custodians of our countryside, we work hard to produce food responsibly, but repeated incidents like this make it increasingly difficult to carry on.

*Signed: Claud Greengrass,
Target Farm, Wiltshire.*

Date: 11 October 2025

FORMAL VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT

Here is an alternative style of an example Victim Impact Statement (VIS) rewritten into an official court-ready template format, suitable for submission through police or prosecution channels for magistrates' court consideration.

This layout aligns with the style used by UK police forces and His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) for Victim Personal Statements and Community Impact Statements, ensuring clear separation of harm categories and professional presentation.

Statements should accurately reflect the author's experiences, using their own vocabulary and avoiding both computer-generated language and police jargon.

Victim Impact Statement

Name: Claud Greengrass

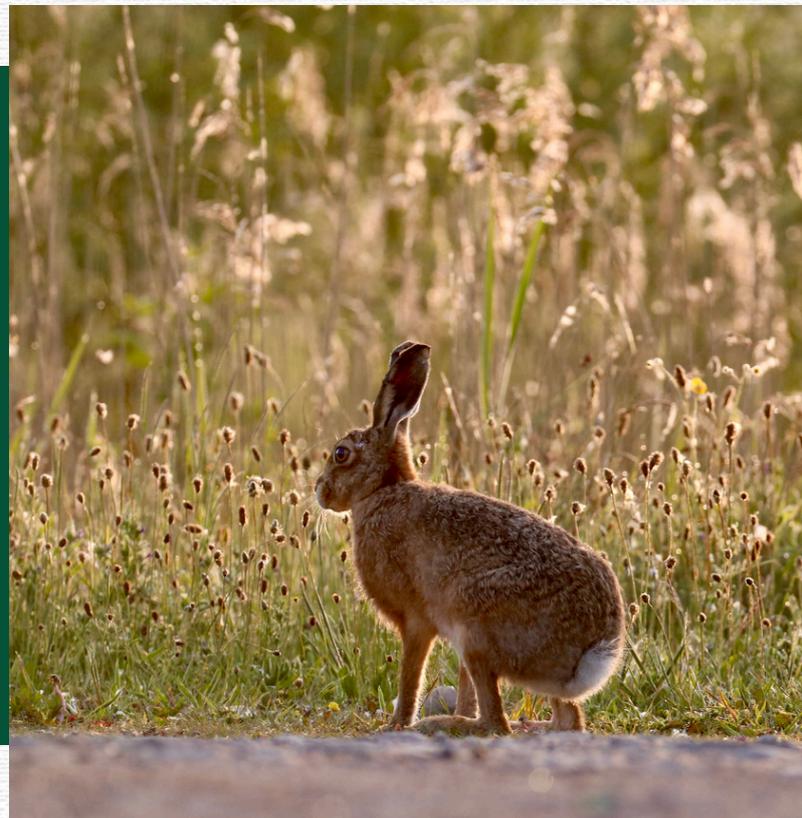
Occupation: Farmer

Address: Target Farm, Wiltshire

Date of Incident: 10th October 2025

Date of Statement: 11th October 2025

Crime Type: Hare Coursing / Criminal Damage / Trespass / Antisocial Behaviour



Summary of Incident

On 10th October 2025, several individuals entered my farmland without permission to take part in illegal hare coursing. They drove vehicles across cultivated fields, cut through fencing, and forced open gates, causing extensive damage.

As a result, livestock escaped onto the A303, a busy A-class road, creating a serious risk to public safety. Traffic police, our community police, and local volunteers attended to assist with recovery of the animals and to record the damage.

Property Damage

This unauthorised incursion onto my farmland caused the following property damage:

- Approximately 40 metres of boundary fencing was cut or flattened at four different locations on my farm.
- Two metal gates were broken off their hinges and rendered unusable.
- Approximately 10 sets of vehicle tyre tracks damaged around seven acres of planted crops across three different fields.
- The incident also resulted in damage to field margins and hedgerows.
- Two vehicles were abandoned in my ditches causing oil to leak into the waterway.

All of this required urgent repair to secure the farm and avoid further livestock escapes.



Financial Loss

The financial loss to my food producing business due to this illegal incursion is:

- 01 Fence and gate repairs:**
estimated at £7,000.
- 02 Crop loss:**
approximately £6,500 due to destroyed winter wheat.
- 03 Livestock loss:**
one sheep destroyed after injury;
veterinary costs incurred for others.
- 04 Lost working time:**
two full days diverted to animal
recovery and repairs.
- 05 Additional security costs:**
specialist consultancy leading to
installation of cameras, alarms,
locks, and reinforced gates totalling
over £18,000.

For a family-run farm, these costs have a significant impact on income and future investment.

Emotional and Psychological Impact

This incident has left me and my family feeling unsafe at home and when out on our own land. We live in an isolated area and fear that coursers may return, especially at night. Since the event:

My wife and I have experienced stress and sleep disturbance, worrying about future incidents.

.....

My wife and children are fearful of going out after dark or walking near the fields.

.....

The sense of fear, violation, and intimidation caused by these offences has reduced our quality of life and created constant anxiety.

.....

I have begun to question whether the UK judicial system, as well as political and policing attitudes, truly value farmers' work. I also find it hard to overcome my tendency to distrust others

We feel vulnerable and unsupported, despite doing everything we can to protect our property and livestock.

Risk to Public Safety and Animal Welfare

The escape of livestock onto the A303 created a serious risk of collision. Drivers were forced to brake and swerve to avoid the animals and the traffic was stopped for fifteen minutes whilst numerous people attempted to shepherd the animals back into my field.

This could easily have resulted in injury or death to motorists, police officers, or members of the public.

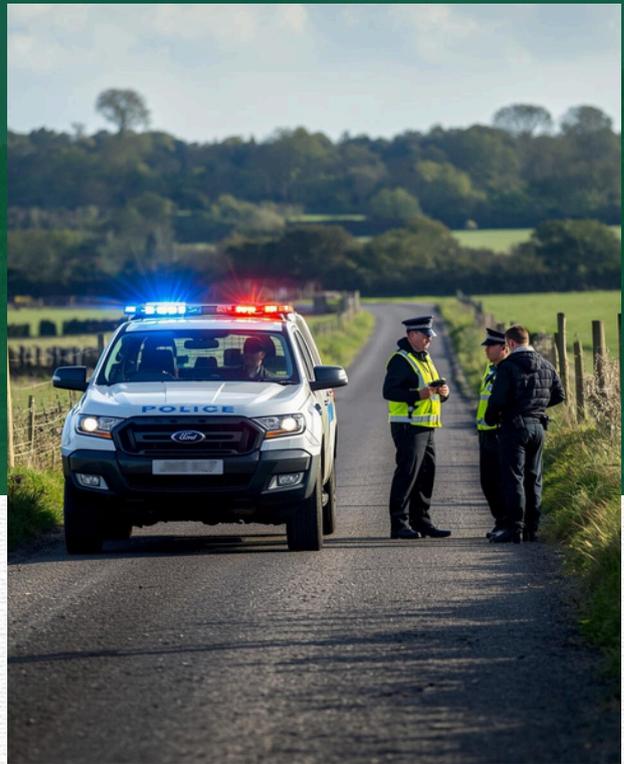
The incident also caused unnecessary suffering to livestock, with one animal fatally injured.

Impact on the Wider Community

Hare coursing is a recurring issue in this area. Neighbouring farms have suffered similar damage, creating a sense of fear and helplessness in the rural community.

These crimes discourage people from working in agriculture and undermine public confidence in the safety of the countryside.

The continued presence of coursers driving erratically, at speed, through our villages and across the rural areas has become a serious community concern, placing strain on local policing resources and residents' wellbeing. They appear to act outside the laws of this land.



Ongoing Consequences

Since the incident, I have invested heavily in extra security — including cameras, intruder alarms, additional lighting, strengthened gates, and digging miles of trenches — all at personal expense and many days of my time.

Despite these measures, I remain concerned that offenders may return, and each incident diverts time and funds from the essential running of the farm.

Victim's Statement to the Court

This crime has caused financial loss, emotional harm, and significant risk to public safety. It is not a minor act of trespass but a deliberate, violent and damaging offence that affects the entire rural community – not to mention the cruelty to the wildlife that is being illegally hunted.

I ask the court to consider the seriousness and repeated nature of hare coursing, and the lasting impact it has on farmers, our families, the wildlife, and the public who share these village roads and rural landscapes.

Signed:

Claud Greengrass. 11 October 2025



Rural SafeGuard

By Optimal Risk Group

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We appreciate your role in helping to make our rural communities safer.

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