

PREVENT FARM & HORSE THEFT

Farm Theft

A farmer's capital is spread over many acres in the form of stock and equipment, much of which is portable and so is easy to steal. The ease of access to most farms makes total security impossible – but there's a lot that you can do to reduce the risks. And it doesn't all involve extra expense.

Farmwatch

Farmwatch schemes encourage everyone in the farming community to be vigilant and to report anything suspicious to the police. It also encourages them to pool their knowledge – people who live in the farming community have a very specialized knowledge which even the police may find it hard to achieve.

The Main Aims Of Farmwatch Are To:

- Reduce opportunities for crime and vandalism.
- Strengthen community spirit so that everyone can play a part in protecting their property.
- Improve two-way communication between farmers and the police.
- Reduce fear of crime.
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Farmwatch schemes are operating in many areas. Your local crime prevention officer can give you advice.

Livestock

Grazing animals are an easy target for thieves. Regularly check the fields where animals are grazing daily if possible.

Keep your hedges, fences and gates in good condition. Ditches form a natural barrier. Field gate hinges should have capping hinges so they cannot be removed easily.

Cattle grids should be removable and locked out of position when not in use. Use locking posts to obstruct large openings to yards etc.

Consider using CCTV so you can watch animals in barns or yards from the comfort of your home. This can be especially useful during busy times like the lambing season.

If livestock is stolen it is important that you can give the police an accurate description. Ear tags and horn brands help the police to identify stock.

Freeze branding, hot branding or tattooing your postcode will also help.

Take photographs of particular valuable animals.

Machinery And Tools

Try to secure or immobilize vehicles or equipment when not in use. If it is possible remove machinery from fields, especially near roads.

Identify your property by:

Keeping a record of the serial number, chassis and model number of machines

Paint your name on valuable tarpaulins in letters at least one foot high.

Using metal engravers to mark tools, vehicles and equipment with your postcode followed by the first two letters of your farm's name.

Always keep tools and small pieces of machinery locked away. Do not leave them

lying around.

Farm Buildings

Store valuable equipment and tools – chainsaws, welding and cutting equipment, vehicle spares and riding tack – in a secure building behind a strong locked door. Or, build a metal storage cage inside a building and keep it locked.

Use British standard locks, good quality locking bars and high security padlocks. Windows can be protected with metal bars. Lock outbuildings when you are not using them.

Thieves don't like well-lit areas so fit outside lights that are controlled by an automatic time-switch or infra-red beams that react to heat or movement.

Consider fitting an intruder alarm or closed circuit TV to alert you to anything suspicious.

Farmhouse

Farmhouses attract burglars because they are often large and in isolated places.

Fit British standard deadlocks to all outside doors, reinforced with strong bolts which are preferably key-operated

Fit window locks on ground floor and drain pipes.

The main door should have a security chain and wide-angle door viewer, so that you can see who is on the other side of door.

A burglar alarm is useful but is often a last line of defense. Most only warn you when

someone has already broken into your house. Your first priority should be to stop them getting that far.

Keep shotguns and firearms in a securely locked place and store ammunition separately. If you have to keep cash or jewelery in the house, a safe is a good idea.

Keep a record of your valuable possession. Where possible, use a security marking device to mark them with your postcode followed by your house number or the first two letters of your farm's name. Photograph your most valuables items – with a ruler to indicate scale.

Don't advertise that you are not at home by leaving notes for traders or garage door open.

When your house is empty ask a neighbor or your local farmwatch to keep an eye on your farm.

And be prepared to do the same for them!

It Costs Nothing To Be Alert

Keep up to date on the current crime trends in your area. A good way to do this is to join your local Farmwatch. Your local police crime prevention officer can advise you. Encourage your employees to be security conscious, and look out for strange vans or cars – registration number may give police a vital lead.

Insurance Pays

It is very important to have adequate insurance cover. It pays to have full cover against theft of vehicles, equipment and livestock etc., as well as for the content of your home and other buildings.

Advice from your insurance company is free – whether it's about insurance itself or on ways to make your farm more secure.

Horse Theft

Install a Gate

The entrance to your equestrian property is your weakest point of vulnerability. This is where horse thieves will gain access to your most valuable investments, and it pays to invest in high-tech security. Although an armed guard would probably qualify as overkill, a computerized gate is a good idea.

Not only will this help prevent horse theft, but a gate also restricts access if you'd like to keep your equestrian property more private.

The best gates are those made of wrought iron or similar material.

Light Your Property

Landscape lighting isn't expensive—either in up-front investment or in energy usage—and this is an excellent way to discourage would-be horse thieves. It is easier to sneak onto equestrian property under the cloak of darkness than to try to load a trailer while exposed by bright light. Large, industrial lamps in your parking lot and landscape lighting around the barn and other structures will be sufficient. You might also want to leave a few lights blazing in the barn and the tack room to suggest that owners are in residence.

Keep an Eye Out

One of the best ways to prevent horse theft is to have someone living on equestrian property full time. It doesn't matter if they are owners, barn managers, stable help or

even renters, so long as their vehicles are parked in the lot and their lights are on at night.

If no one is available to live on site, however, you can discourage horse thieves by installing security cameras on the premises. Cameras aren't expensive to buy or maintain, and you don't need the latest in video technology. It is best to keep a few cameras visible to deter horse thieves, then a few that are hidden just in case the visible cameras are destroyed.

Prepare for the Worst

Each of your horses should have Coggins reports filed in the barn. Make sure you've correctly noted each horse's color, markings and distinguishing features so you can give an adequate description to the authorities.

You can also purchase horse theft insurance.

Consider also the value of your saddles, bridles, farm equipment and other valuables that could be stolen. Keep receipts for each item you purchase along with detailed descriptions in case you need to file an insurance claim.