



Introduction

It has been an incredibly busy few months for the team and hopefully this newsletter will give you a little insight to completed and ongoing investigations alongside our engagement events and of course other policing demands across the county.

Our newer version of the newsletter contains many more contributions from the wider team around their areas of expertise and passions which I hope you will find interesting.

As always, our inbox

(OperationRandall@norfolk.police.uk) is always open if you ever wish to discuss anything with us, please always report crime incidents via 101 or online reporting form; <https://www.norfolk.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>

Remember it should always be 999 if there is immediate danger to life, risk of harm or a crime is in progress.

We will also continue as previously to produce a PDF version of the newsletter for parish councils, organisations and other individuals who wish to print out and put on noticeboards etc. please drop us an email should you wish to get a copy of the newsletter in this format.

Rural Thefts

In recent weeks in Norfolk we have seen an increase in the theft of various trailers of all shapes and sizes. With this increase in trailer thefts we are therefore wanting to remind all how important it is to make sure your trailer is either in a position where it is blocked in or is locked with things such as a hitch lock.

Fortunately, this year we have seen fewer incidents of GPS thefts compared to previous years. However, in the past we have seen the number thefts can surge after periods of quietness. Therefore, we urge you to remain vigilant, remove GPS receivers each night after use, and store them in a safe and secure location.

Please remember your farm security and be aware of who is entering your yard or barns. Basic precautions, such as locking gates and buildings, can help protect you and prevent you from becoming an easy target. This advice also applies to those storing garden tools at home or on allotments. Secure your property to deter theft and stay alert to any suspicious behaviour. Thieves often make mistakes that can help us identify them.

We frequently encounter items that we cannot link to an owner or prove are stolen, resulting in missed opportunities to return them. Please always report the theft, take serial numbers from your property or security mark them so we can trace the ownership back to you.



NEED TO TALK TO US?

operationrandall@norfolk.police.uk | 07900 407106

Hare Coursing Update

We are now coming to the end of the traditional 'season' for this illegal activity mainly because crops in the fields start to get too tall for the people and dogs to spot the hares. The dogs involved in this activity hunt by sight rather than scent, so they need to have a clear flat view and also soft wet ground which reduces the risk of injury to the dogs.

This season, we have seen a slight increase in reports of hare coursing, which may be attributed to the milder winter weather. Although it might not have felt like it, this winter has been much drier than previous ones, with fewer hard frosts. Those involved in hare coursing prefer soft ground that is not waterlogged, as their vehicles can get stuck in muddy fields. Similarly, hard frosted ground poses the same risks as dry ground, increasing the likelihood of injury.

Although we have seen this small increase our positive outcomes in tackling it have increased dramatically. So far this season we have dealt with 5 incidents with 20 individuals being charged with hare coursing related offences. We have also seized thousands of pounds worth of equipment, vehicles and 19 dogs.

Of the 20 people charged, 17 have so far been convicted and a further final case is in court later this month.

Whilst court results do vary slightly, in many cases we are successfully recovering significant amounts of money towards the cost of kennelling the dogs.

Although seizing and caring for dogs at a high standard is costly, but it is considered the most effective way to reduce and deter illegal activities like hare coursing. By removing the dogs, we eliminate the primary tool used to commit the crime, preventing further incidents (until, unfortunately, another dog can be trained, which can take months and likely

extend into the next season). We continue to apply for disqualification orders to prevent these individuals from owning dogs in the future and seek compensation for affected landowners.

Poaching

Along a similar vein to hare coursing, poaching is often prevalent in the winter months whether that be those taking a few birds or those wishing to shoot deer on land they have no permission to do so.

We have received several reports of deer carcasses being found on land where no permission has been granted. This often occurs at night so if you see anything suspicious, please do let us know.

Positive results around this sort of activity are often few and far between.

On the 22nd of December, a member of the public spotted suspicious behaviour involving three men and seven dogs on the A47. The men appeared to be chasing and using catapults on neighbouring land. The police deployed a drone, which captured footage of the individuals using catapults and dogs to hunt and kill deer, hares, and rabbits.

All seven dogs were seized, along with a vehicle, and the three men were arrested. They all pleaded guilty to illegal hunting, with one also pleading guilty to attempting to kill a deer with a missile. The court ordered the forfeiture of all seven dogs and the vehicle, and the three men were fined a total of £5,720, which included court costs and kennelling fees.

WhatsApp Group

The Operation Randall WhatsApp group is expanding. At present the group mainly consists of partner agencies, key landowners and administrators of other social media rural groups. I am currently looking at increasing the size of this group so if you meet one or more of the above criteria – work for a partner agency, key landowner or you administer another rural group on social media - or if you think you would benefit or be able to contribute in any way, I want to hear from you. You can contact me on email at christopher.shelley@norfolk.pnn.police.uk

Dogs Worrying Livestock

This time of year brings us some longer hours of sunshine and those of us with pets want to get out more with our four legged friends. This is at the same time many of farm animals are also getting back out on grass, sheep are particularly vulnerable with many either heavily in lamb or with young lambs at foot.

Over last few weeks we have had a number of reports of dogs getting into sheep fields, sadly resulting in one case with loss of life and some horrific injuries and suffering. We have also had incident of dogs chasing horses in a field.

Even the best behaved dog can suddenly change behaviour when around livestock. At all times please keep them on a lead. Failure to do so could lead to you being prosecuted for failing to have your dog under control and causing distress to other animals.

We are also encouraging livestock owners to place signs at key points to notify dog walkers that livestock is in the area perhaps where they haven't either been for a while or before. Owners are reminded to remove signs once livestock is moved to prevent people becoming frustrated and ignoring such signs.

Nesting Bird Disturbances

We often receive reports of nesting bird disturbance offences at this time of year. There is often a belief that hedges can't be legally cut between March and August each year, sadly this isn't the case. There are no set dates as to when you can and can't cut a hedge, it is recommended to avoid the summer months to avoid committing offences.

If a hedge or tree needs cutting during bird nesting season it is essential thorough checks are completed as all active nests and their eggs are protected by law.

Destroying any nest or disturbing a nesting bird is a criminal offence alongside the simple fact so many of our native birds are declining rapidly and need all the help

they can.

Other Wildlife Crime

PC Chris Shelley has been handling a variety of incidents involving diverse wildlife, including barn owls, a polecat, buzzards, a red kite, and a water vole.

We look where possible to make use of a government funded scheme to test wildlife for pesticides, herbicides or rodenticide.

The scheme has two objectives:

To provide information to the regulator on hazards to wildlife and companion animals and beneficial invertebrates from pesticides; and

To enforce the correct use of pesticides, identifying and penalising those who deliberately or recklessly misuse and abuse pesticides.

Loads more information on the scheme can be found on the below link and you can also make your own direct referrals:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pesticides/reducing-environmental-impact/wildlife/wildlife-incident-investigation-scheme.htm>

Withdrawal of Pesticide Bendiocarb (common product name Bendiocarb)

Bendiocarb is the active ingredient in a product named Ficam D and was legally used internally to tackle ants, wasps and hornet nests. Sadly it has been abused over the years and used to illegally poison birds of prey, including incidents in Norfolk.

The product was withdrawn from market on 29th of July 2024 and can no longer be purchased.

Since 25 January 2025 the product cannot be used.

Anyone found using it is liable to prosecution. So please check sheds, chemical stores etc. and dispose SAFELY and CORRECTLY of any unused product.



Fishery Patrols

On Sunday 16th March PC Alex Lovelock conducted a joint patrol with the Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement officers for OP Clampdown (a National Operation tackling illegal fishing within the closed season). During this day various areas of Norfolk's riverways were covered including Thetford and Stoke ferry, which historically been hotspots for illegal fishing. During these patrols there were many engagements with members of the public giving us the opportunity to educate and highlight the Operation. We are hopeful of being able to support Op Clampdown throughout the season.

Scrap Metal Trading

In March PC James King visited some Scrap Metal dealers around the county as part of Op Goldjuno, talking with the scrap metal dealers about crime prevention, reporting concerns around stolen property and feeding back any issues to local councils and Police.

It was a very successful week with lots of businesses spoken to who were happy to have a point of contact within the Constabulary.

If you are a scrap metal dealer and would like to get in touch, please do.

Heritage Crime

This year we have welcomed our new Police and Crime Commissioner Sarah Taylor. The PCC hosted a Heritage roundtable with partners from all corners of the Heritage world. This was a great sounding board for the problems faced and an opportunity to network. It was clear that there is much more we can do to work together and understand the problems faced across Norfolk.

The last few months have sadly seen many churches across the region become victim to criminal damage and theft. Primarily from those abusing alcohol and drugs. We remind those who are wardens or caretakers to lock up

and move all items from value from any accessible areas within the Church. I understand that for many, churches are a sanctuary and closing them after dark may seem contrary to that ethos. However, practical measures to protect property must be advised by the police. Illegal metal detecting, known as nighthawking, is an ongoing issue that often goes unseen and unreported. However, we have managed to address a few nighthawking incidents recently. One individual was apprehended for illegally detecting on farmland in the Breckland area. The gamekeeper provided a picture of the suspect's vehicle parked nearby, enabling us to stop the suspect and seize the metal detector found in the vehicle. Additionally, three other suspects are under investigation for detecting on land near Caistor Roman Town, based on footage sent to us by a member of the public. We expect all three suspects to be dealt with in due course. Unfortunately, we are not always as fortunate, and holes were dug into the scheduled land at Thetford Castle.

Ongoing work with the museum services has shown individuals within the metal detecting community trying to take advantage of the weakness of the treasure act. We are investigating these reports to see where offences may have occurred. Unscrupulous individuals appear to be finding or buying treasure items from others and then lying about the circumstances around the discovery. The work we do with the Museum services makes sure that due diligence is carried out when the suspicions are there.

We are working on adding Norfolk to the list of counties who are successfully using Heritage Watch. This was discussed at the Heritage Community Rural Action Group chaired by PC Chris Holmes on the 2nd April and with the support of the PCCs office we are looking to move this forward this year.



Spring in Countryside

The dark winter months are nearly behind us now, the first flowers of the year - the snowdrop - are nearly all wilted away and the crocuses, daffodils, and then tulips replace them as spring progresses with their variety of colours. With them comes the fresh green sugary grass which so much of our wildlife and livestock thrive on.

Badgers have a very interesting life cycle - with them having their young in the winter months so when the food is more abundant in the spring they start coming out of the sett. The hedgehogs start to spend the evenings scuttling around feeding up before breeding season.

We have already touched on our nesting birds but as the days get longer and warmer insect numbers increase and in come our summer migratory birds including sand martins and chiffchaff before followed by the swallows. You cannot beat a summer evening watching swallows swooping down feeding on flying insects – water meadows can be the best place to be for this sight.

Many of our native birds are already well into building their nests, I am sure I will hear the usual stories in the coming weeks of the unusual places birds have taken up residence which has included a wheel arch of a brand new police car waiting to be fitted with its operational kit! Other classics are a cigarette butt bin on a wall and the local post box. And who can forget the seagull who decided a petrol forecourt on was the best place? Remember once these nests are active they cannot be destroyed – it's a criminal offence. On our farms, the drier weather will allow many of our over wintered stock to move from winter accommodation back onto the green grass and enjoy the sun on their back. Lambs will be bouncing around

as their mothers feed another great spring sight.

The first silage cut won't be many weeks away. Silage is a really important part of the livestock calendar its basically the processing of spring and summer grass into a pickling type situation to create a vital winter feed. One thing that can be incredibly dangerous to livestock is litter and dog excrement being left in fields which then ends up going in the 'pickling process'. Please follow the countryside code take your litter home with you and clean up behind your dog wherever you are.

Our farmers will be busy preparing the last few seed beds of the spring with spring barley, sugar beet and then generally the last to be planted maize all being put into the ground to give us our food and products we know and love. I read today that the 2024/2025 sugar beet season has come to an end with British Sugar producing 1.1million tons of sugar of which a large proportion comes from Norfolk farms. Considering the UK consumes just over 2.2 tonnes of sugar you can see how important the eastern region is to the UK supply of sugar.

Final Word

Thankyou as always for taking the time to read our newsletter. We hope you enjoy spring and we look forward to seeing as many as possible over the summer. Keep an eye on our social media channels where we will update with events we are attending and any ongoing jobs.

If you wish to contact us please reach out to us via email on OperationRandall@norfolk.police.uk

The police will never
ask you for cash or
your bank details.

STOP...
this is a scam!

THE
TRAP