



# Farmer Perceptions on Farm and Rural Crime within Dyfed-Powys Police.

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# Key Facts:

63

## Total Responses

Farmers and rural residents from Dyfed-Powys participated in the survey

5/10

## Police Effectiveness Rating

Average score out of 10 for police effectiveness

100%

## Investment in Security

CCTV, locks, and alarms widely adopted

The survey revealed that the most common crimes experienced by farmers include machinery and equipment theft, livestock worrying, attempted theft, general theft, and vandalism. Preventive measures such as CCTV, locks, and alarms have been widely adopted by the farming community; however, average police effectiveness was rated at 5/10. Recommendations include increasing rural policing resources and patrols, improving community engagement and visibility, providing grants for security technology, enhancing communication and follow-up, and using data-driven policing for hotspot targeting.

# Research Context and Literature Review

Rural crime in Wales has been the subject of increasing academic attention. Research by Morris and colleagues at Aberystwyth University has documented the distinctive nature of farm and rural crime in Dyfed Powys and across Wales more broadly: <https://tinyurl.com/ejb3dwz3>



Norris and Morris (2024) examine crime and safety in rural Wales within the broader context of rural policing challenges, highlighting the unique geographical and social factors that shape both crime patterns and police responses in rural areas: <https://tinyurl.com/3un63dkz>



The second report on rural and farm crime in Dyfed Powys provides longitudinal data that contextualises the current findings: <https://tinyurl.com/3b9mv4y6>



International research by Harkness (2020) on farm crime in Australia offers comparative insights into the global nature of rural crime challenges, noting similar patterns of underreporting and community concern: <https://tinyurl.com/4ft944z3>



# Types of Crime Reported

The survey identified machinery and equipment theft as the most commonly reported crime type amongst respondents. This was followed by livestock-related crimes, including livestock worrying by dogs, which represents a significant concern for farmers.

Survey respondents expressed mixed views regarding police response to rural crime incidents. Whilst some farmers praised the dedicated rural crime team for their specialist knowledge and commitment, others noted concerns about slow response times and limited resources.

**The geographical challenges of policing rural areas, combined with competing demands on police resources, create significant operational difficulties in responding to farm crime.**

Attempted theft, general theft, and vandalism were also frequently reported, reflecting the diverse range of criminal activities affecting rural communities. Research by Norris and Morris highlights the structural challenges facing rural policing in Wales, including vast geographical areas, dispersed populations, and the need for specialist knowledge of agricultural practices and rural communities. These findings align with broader research on rural crime patterns in Wales (<https://tinyurl.com/bdzusak3>)

# Machinery and Equipment Theft

## The Primary Concern

Machinery and equipment theft emerged as the most significant crime type affecting farmers in the Dyfed Powys area. The high value of agricultural machinery, combined with its often remote storage locations, makes it an attractive target for organised criminal groups.

Farmers reported that the theft of tractors, quad bikes, tools, and other essential equipment not only represents substantial financial loss but also disrupts farming operations, particularly during critical periods such as harvest or lambing season.

The portable nature of much farm equipment and the difficulty of securing large rural properties contribute to the vulnerability of these assets.



# Livestock Worrying and Related Crimes

Livestock worrying, primarily caused by dogs attacking or chasing farm animals, was identified as a major concern amongst respondents. This crime type has significant welfare implications for animals and can result in substantial financial losses through injury, death, or stress-induced complications such as miscarriage in pregnant ewes.

## Direct Physical Harm

Dogs attacking sheep, cattle, or other livestock, causing injuries or death

## Stress-Related Impacts

Chasing incidents leading to miscarriage, reduced productivity, or long-term behavioural changes

## Financial Consequences

Veterinary costs, loss of breeding stock, and reduced market value of affected animals

Research has shown that livestock worrying is often underreported, with many farmers viewing it as an inevitable aspect of rural life rather than a criminal matter requiring police intervention.

# Attempted Theft, General Theft, and Vandalism

Beyond the primary crime types, farmers reported experiencing attempted theft, general theft of various items, and vandalism to property and equipment. These crimes, whilst sometimes involving lower overall values, contribute significantly to the overall burden of rural crime:

- Attempted theft incidents indicate criminal reconnaissance and planning, often preceding more serious offences;
- General theft encompasses a wide range of items including fuel, tools, building materials, and livestock;
- Vandalism to gates, fences, buildings, and equipment creates repair costs and operational disruption;
- Fly-tipping on farmland represents both an environmental crime and a financial burden for disposal.

**The cumulative impact of these "lower-level" crimes should not be underestimated, as they also contribute to farmers' sense of vulnerability and the overall cost of rural businesses.**

# Police Effectiveness Rating

5/10

Average police effectiveness rating  
from survey respondents

The average police effectiveness rating of 5 out of maximum 10 reflects significant dissatisfaction amongst the farming community regarding police performance in addressing rural crime. This moderate score suggests that whilst some positive experiences exist, there is substantial room for improvement.

Factors contributing to this rating include perceived slow response times, lack of follow-up on reported incidents, limited visibility of police in rural areas, and a sense that farm crime is not prioritised compared to urban crime.

**However, respondents who had interacted with the specialist rural crime team often provided more positive feedback, suggesting that dedicated rural policing resources can improve farmer satisfaction and outcomes.**



# Additional Security Investments

Beyond the primary security measures of CCTV, locks, and alarms, farmers have implemented a range of additional preventive strategies to protect their property and livestock. **These measures reflect the innovative and proactive approach taken by the farming community in response to persistent crime threats.**

## Physical Security Enhancements

- Installation of security lighting with motion sensors
- Reinforcement of gates and fencing
- Creation of secure compounds for high-value equipment
- Use of ground anchors and immobilisation devices
- Strategic landscaping to improve natural surveillance

## Technology and Tracking

- GPS tracking devices on machinery and vehicles
- Property marking and registration schemes
- Livestock identification and traceability systems
- Community alert systems and social media groups
- Remote monitoring via smartphone applications

# Impact of Rural Crime on Farming Communities

The impact of rural crime extends far beyond the immediate financial costs of stolen or damaged property. Survey respondents reported increased anxiety, stress, and a diminished sense of security within their own homes and on their land.

## Psychological Impact

Increased anxiety, stress, and fear, particularly for farmers living in isolated locations. The violation of personal and business space creates lasting emotional effects.

## Financial Burden

Direct costs of theft and damage, combined with increased insurance premiums and substantial investment in security measures, place significant strain on farm businesses.

## Operational Disruption

Theft of essential equipment during critical farming periods can cause severe operational problems, missed deadlines, and reduced productivity.

Research by Morris and colleagues documents the broader social and economic impacts of rural crime on Welsh farming communities, including effects on mental health and community cohesion: <https://tinyurl.com/4ppw4tph>

# The Hidden Costs of Rural Crime

Whilst the direct financial costs of rural crime are significant, the hidden costs are often overlooked in official statistics and policy discussions. These indirect impacts can be equally or more damaging to farming businesses and rural communities.

**The cumulative burden of rural crime includes not only stolen property but also the time, money, and emotional energy invested in prevention, recovery, and ongoing vigilance.**

- 1. Time costs:** Hours spent on security measures, reporting crimes, dealing with insurance, and attending court proceedings
- 2. Opportunity costs:** Resources diverted from productive farming activities to crime prevention and response
- 3. Insurance impacts:** Increased premiums, higher excesses, and difficulty obtaining coverage for certain items
- 4. Community effects:** Erosion of trust, reduced social capital, and increased isolation
- 5. Health impacts:** Stress-related illness, sleep disruption, and mental health challenges

# Recommendation 1: Increasing Rural Policing Resources

## Enhanced Presence and Patrols

The first key recommendation is to increase rural policing resources and patrols within the Dyfed Powys area. This includes expanding the rural crime team, increasing the frequency of patrols in agricultural areas, and ensuring adequate coverage during high-risk periods.

Research evidence suggests that visible police presence in rural areas acts as both a deterrent to potential offenders and a reassurance to farming communities. Regular patrols also enable officers to develop local knowledge and relationships with farmers, improving intelligence gathering and response effectiveness.

Dedicated rural crime officers with specialist knowledge of agricultural practices, equipment, and livestock are essential for effective investigation and prevention of farm crime.

# Recommendation 2: Community Engagement and Visibility

Improving community engagement and police visibility represents a critical recommendation for enhancing rural crime prevention and response. This involves building stronger relationships between police and farming communities through regular communication, attendance at agricultural events, and proactive outreach.

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## Regular Community Meetings

Establish regular forums for farmers to meet with police, share concerns, and receive crime prevention advice

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## Farm Watch Schemes

Support and expand Farm Watch and rural community alert schemes to facilitate information sharing

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## Agricultural Event Attendance

Ensure police presence at agricultural shows, markets, and farming events to build relationships and gather intelligence

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## Social Media Engagement

Utilise social media platforms to communicate with rural communities, share crime prevention advice, and provide updates

# Recommendation 3: Security Technology Grants

Providing grants for security technology represents an important recommendation to support farmers in protecting their property and livestock. Given the substantial financial burden of security investments documented in the survey, targeted grant schemes could help smaller farms and those most vulnerable to crime.

## Grant Scheme Elements

- Funding for CCTV systems and monitoring equipment
- Support for GPS tracking devices on machinery
- Subsidies for enhanced physical security measures
- Assistance with property marking and registration
- Investment in community alert systems

## Implementation Considerations

- Prioritise farms in high-crime areas or hotspots
- Target support at smaller businesses with limited resources
- Require evidence-based security assessments
- Link funding to crime prevention partnerships
- Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of investments

Such schemes could be funded through partnerships between police, local authorities, Welsh Government, and agricultural organisations, potentially drawing on rural development funding streams.

# Recommendation 4: Enhanced Communication and Follow-Up

Enhancing communication and follow-up procedures represents a crucial recommendation for improving farmer satisfaction with police response. Survey respondents frequently cited lack of feedback on reported incidents as a source of frustration and disengagement.



## Initial Response

Prompt acknowledgement of crime reports with clear reference numbers and contact details



## Investigation Updates

Regular communication about investigation progress, even when no significant developments occur



## Outcome Notification

Clear explanation of investigation outcomes, reasons for decisions, and any further action available



## Victim Support

Provision of crime prevention advice and signposting to support services where appropriate

Improved communication protocols should include dedicated contact points for rural crime, realistic timeframes for response and investigation, and accessible channels for farmers to provide additional information or raise concerns.

# Broader Policy Implications and Future Research

The findings from this survey have broader implications for rural crime policy in Dyfed–Powys, Wales and beyond. They highlight the need for sustained attention to rural crime issues, adequate resourcing of rural policing, and recognition of the distinctive challenges facing farming communities.

## Policy Development Priorities

- Integration of rural crime into mainstream policing strategies
- Recognition of rural crime in Police and Crime Commissioner priorities
- Adequate funding for specialist rural crime teams
- Partnership approaches involving police, local authorities, and agricultural organisations
- Legislative measures to address specific rural crime challenges

## Future Research Needs

- Longitudinal studies tracking rural crime trends over time
- Evaluation of crime prevention interventions and their effectiveness
- Research on the experiences of rural crime victims
- Comparative studies across different rural police force areas
- Investigation of organised crime involvement in rural crime

# Conclusion

This report has examined farmer perceptions on farm and rural crime within Dyfed Powys Police, drawing on survey data from 63 respondents and contextualising findings within the broader academic literature. The evidence reveals significant concerns about machinery theft, livestock worrying, and other crime types, alongside moderate satisfaction with police effectiveness (rated at 5/10).

Farmers have responded to crime threats through substantial investment in preventive measures including CCTV, locks, and alarms, representing a significant financial burden on farming businesses. The impact of rural crime extends beyond direct financial costs to include psychological effects, operational disruption, and broader community impacts.

**The recommendations presented in this report—increasing rural policing resources and patrols, improving community engagement and visibility, providing grants for security technology, and enhancing communication and follow-up—offer a comprehensive framework for improving rural crime prevention and response.**

Implementation of these recommendations requires sustained commitment from Dyfed Powys Police, partner agencies, and policymakers, alongside continued research and evaluation to ensure evidence-based approaches to this important issue affecting Welsh farming communities.

# About the project

Funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Cymru Wledig LPIP Rural Wales is one of four Local Policy Innovation Partnerships established across the UK to connect researchers with local policymakers and communities to address regional challenges and drive sustainable and inclusive growth. It connects academic researchers, public bodies, third and private sector organisations and communities, with the aim of enhancing the use of research and innovation to support effective policy-making, sustainable regional development, and the wellbeing of people and places across rural Wales.

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Dr Wyn Morris is a senior lecturer at Aberystwyth Business School. He graduated from Aberystwyth University in 2001 with a BSc in Rural Resource Management, specialising in business and economics. His career took him to the Farm Assurance Livestock Scheme where he worked as Certification and Assessment Coordinator while studying for an MSc Econ in Entrepreneurship through the medium of Welsh. Wyn joined Aberystwyth University staff as an Investigational Officer with the Farm Business Survey in 2003, before taking up a post at the School of Business and Management in 2010. His main areas of research and teaching are in management, strategy and operations with a focus on rural entrepreneurship.

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Dr Gareth Norris is a senior lecturer based in the Department of Psychology at Aberystwyth University where he has been employed since 2006. His main areas of research and teaching focus on forensic and criminological psychology, particularly judgement and decision making in legal contexts. Alongside his work with rural crime, he has conducted evaluations for the Home Office on Serious and Organised Crime and with Youth Justice in developing risk assessment tools.