

RuralMatters

POLICE SCOTLAND

Keeping our Rural Communities Safe

October 2023



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SCOTLAND**

Keeping people safe

POILEAS ALBA



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Welcome to the October edition of Rural Matters.

A quarterly bulletin produced by the Police Scotland North East Division Crime Reduction Team aimed at keeping you up to date with what's happening in our countryside.

In this edition of Rural Matters Sergeant Scott McKay explains how partnership working is cracking down on organised crime gangs keen to exploit the vulnerable and young across rural communities in the North East.

Constable Matthew Lawson from the Inverurie Roads Policing Team looks at the most common traffic offences encountered in rural areas.

We examine what makes a good chain for securing gates and property.

Criminals will often take advantage of darker nights. Here are our top 10 tips to help secure your rural property and avoid becoming a victim of crime.

Flytipping can pose a threat to public health, wildlife and the environment. We look at ways to help protect your property.

From the latest frauds and scams, to general security measures, each issue will bring you advice on how to keep your property safe.

Rural Crime across Scotland is increasing and criminals are using ever more sophisticated methods. By working in partnership we can make our countryside a safer place to live and work.



North East Crime Reduction Team Rural Roadshow

The Crime Reduction Team will be touring the North East this Autumn - Winter to answer your queries regarding rural security. Come and meet the team to get the latest advice on everything from quad bike security to keeping your office computer safe from viruses and hackers. The team will be out and about on the following dates across the North so pop along and say hello.



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SRUC CRAIBSTONE

Bucksburn, AB21 9YA
25th October
10am-2pm

NFU MUTUAL

Laurencekirk, AB30 1BE
26th October
10am-1pm

NORVITE FARM & COUNTRY SHOP

Oldmeldrum, AB51 0AG
8th November
10am-1pm

NORVITE FARM & COUNTRY SHOP

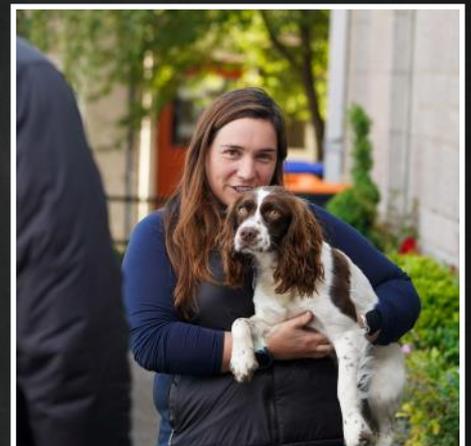
Insch, AB52 6YD
6th December
10am-1pm

NORVITE FARM & COUNTRY SHOP

Aboyne, AB34 5BD
15th December
10am-1pm

During July officers from the North East Crime Reduction Team visited farms, businesses and estates across Deeside providing advice regarding physical security and staying safe online.

The team were keen to emphasise to those they met that simple inexpensive measures, such as always removing vehicle keys, are enough to deter most thieves.





OPERATION PROTECTOR

Sergeant Scott McKay explains how partnership working is cracking down on organised crime gangs keen to exploit the vulnerable and young across rural communities in the North East.



The partnerships are made up of representatives from:

- Police Scotland
- British Transport Police
- Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray Local Authorities
- The NHS
- Turning Point Scotland
- Alcohol & Drugs Action
- Arrows (Quarriers).

County Lines is the name given to drug dealing where organised criminal groups (OCGs) use phone lines to move and supply drugs, usually from cities, into smaller towns and rural areas.

OCG's exploit vulnerable people, including children and those with mental health or dependency issues, by recruiting them to transport and sell drugs. Often this entails them being transported (or 'Trafficked') hundreds of miles from their home address to rural communities like here in the North East.

Criminals may also take over the home address of a vulnerable person, using threats or coercion, to use as a base for their drug dealing or to store drugs. This is known as 'cuckooing'.

Like the rest of the UK County Lines gangs are actively involved in drug supply and the cultivation of Cannabis in the North East of Scotland.

Operation Protector is the North East's pioneering multi-agency approach to reducing drug related harm in our communities.

Agencies are working together across Grampian to minimise the risk to those who are vulnerable in our communities and target those causing harm.

Assertive Outreach is undertaken by joint teams from Police, Social Work, Substance Services and Housing and brings real time support including options like medically assisted treatment, support with mental health, housing or cost of living issues.

Community Outreach Multi-agency hubs in the heart of our communities aim to raise awareness of the wider picture associated with drug dependency and the risks of 'cuckooing' and exploitation.

Community Safety and Improvement is undertaken between Police and Local Authorities. This often focusses on key perpetrators of drug related harm and seeks to reduce the harm they cause by forcing a change in their behaviour by working with the individual to deter criminality.

Enforcement Activity is undertaken by Police in the form of Drug Search Warrants and pre-planned arrests of those involved in committing serious drug related harm and violence.

County Lines gangs rely on their activities going unnoticed. Rural communities and even residential areas in larger towns and cities are often aware something 'isn't right' at an address but may not know what to look out for.

Indications that someone is the victim of cuckooing or are involved in the supply of drugs:

Frequent visitors at unsociable hours and for short periods of time

Changes in your neighbour's daily routine

Unusual smells coming from a property

Suspicious or unfamiliar vehicles outside an address

Regular hand to hand exchanges in and around the property

Increase in anti-social behaviour

Rural communities and in particular private rental properties or industrial buildings are often selected by OCG's so that their activities can go unnoticed.

Indications that a property is being used for the cultivation of Cannabis:

A powerful distinctive sweet, sickly aroma

Blacked out windows, or vents sealed/blocked to prevent the heat and smell of cannabis from inside the property escaping

High levels of condensation on windows

Noise from fans

Large amounts of rubbish, including compost bags

Electricity meters being tampered with and new cabling sometimes leading to street lighting.

Signs of a property being lived in but no sign of anyone coming and going

If you have any concerns regarding someone who may be the victim of cuckooing or who may be involved in the supply of drugs contact Police on 101 or CrimeStoppers (anonymously) on 0800 555 111.

Likewise if you have concerns regarding a property being used for the cultivation of Cannabis do not approach the property but contact Police on 101 or CrimeStoppers (anonymously) on 0800 555 111.

In an emergency contact 999.



Constable Matthew Lawson from the Inverurie Roads Policing Team looks at the most common traffic offences encountered in rural areas.



Light trailers & caravans up to 3500kg

When towing a trailer with a maximum authorised mass not exceeding 750kg, which is not fitted with brakes, an appropriate secondary coupling must be attached. This ensures the trailer remains attached to the towing vehicle and under control in the event of the main coupling failing. The secondary coupling must prevent the trailer's tow hitch from hitting the ground if the vehicle becomes uncoupled.

For trailers larger than 750kg, which should be fitted with a braking system, a breakaway cable must be fitted. This must be attached to the towing vehicle in such a manner so that, should the trailer become detached, the breakaway cable will operate the trailer's brakes. After the brakes are applied, the breakaway cable is designed to snap and the trailer will stop. It is not advisable to connect the breakaway cable to the tow-ball itself, unless it cannot be avoided. Most tow bars have either a drilled hole, or attachment, specifically intended to accept the breakaway cable's spring clip. Ensure the breakaway cable is fitted in line with manufacturer's instructions.

Braking systems. If a trailer is fitted with a braking system, every part of the system must be maintained in good and efficient working order, and be properly adjusted. This includes the operation of the overrun system, hand brake, linkages and the brakes themselves.

Tyres. The same rules apply to tyres on a trailer as they do on a car. There must be a minimum of 1.6mm of tread, and they must not be damaged.

Lights. All lamps fitted to a trailer must be maintained in good and efficient working order.

Drivers must ensure that the vehicle they are using is suitable for the particular trailer they are towing. Always check the manufacturer's plates fitted to vehicles and vehicle handbooks, which will state the vehicle's maximum authorised mass. It will also state the vehicles maximum train weight, which includes any trailer and load being carried.

Drivers must be aware of how much weight can legally be carried on the trailer itself, and across each axle. Most trailers will have a manufacturer's plate attached, which will display this information. This includes both the weight of the trailer, and the load being carried. The load should be evenly distributed and recommended nose weight limit should not be exceeded.

The correct registration plate must be displayed on the rear of a trailer.

Drivers must be aware that when towing a trailer on roads where the national speed limit applies, the speed limit which applies to them is reduced. On a single carriageway road the speed limit when towing trailer is 50mph instead of 60mph. On dual carriageways and motorways the speed limit is 60mph instead of 70mph.

Load Security

Any load being carried by a motor vehicle or trailer must be secured. Relying on the load's own weight is not sufficient. The load must be carried in such a position that no danger is likely to be caused to others. This applies to ALL types of vehicles and trailers, including motor cars, light goods vehicles, agricultural vehicles and heavy goods vehicles.

For further guidance regarding towing trailers - www.gov.uk/guidance/tow-a-trailer-with-a-car-safety-checks

Apply now.

Easy job.

Big cash pay outs.

No experience
necessary*

See page 12 for full details

Here are our top 10 tips to help secure your rural property and avoid becoming a victim of crime as the darker nights approach.



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AFTER DARK

Harden your perimeter. Consider one point of entry/exit and secure with a good quality steel gate whilst taking into account any access rights.

Install Adequate Lighting. Well-placed outdoor lighting can deter criminals and help you spot them if they do approach your property.

Secure Outbuildings. Lock barns, sheds, and other outbuildings. Ensure all external doors are well maintained and fitted with good quality locks.

Remove keys from vehicles. Don't make it easy for criminals, always remove the keys and where possible lock them away in secure cabinets.

Mark your property. Keep a record of all tools and equipment with photographs and serial numbers. Consider using a DNA marking product such as Selecta DNA.

Secure your fuel. All fuel tanks should be fitted with locking fuel caps. Locate tanks away from roads, so as not to be seen from passing traffic.

Away from home. When you're away use timers to turn on lights, radios, or TVs to create the appearance of occupancy and put off unwanted visitors. Smart plugs allow times to be changed even whilst away.

Consider CCTV. CCTV is a useful tool but should always be combined with appropriate physical security. Battery powered cameras that work off the 4G network can be used in remote locations and placed inside vehicles.

Neighbourhood Watch Scotland Alerts help you stay up to date with the latest crime, safety and resilience news for your local area. To receive free alerts go www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk

Report crime to the police. If you are a victim of crime, it is important to report it to the police. This will help us to identify crime trends and take steps to prevent future crimes.

* must be willing to provide bank details and break the law.

Be wary of offers of easy cash. You may be approached by fraudsters online or in person. They may post what looks like a genuine job ad then ask for your bank details.

If you let this happen you are involved in money laundering which is a crime.

Allowing your bank account to be used to send and receive funds for other people makes you a money mule.

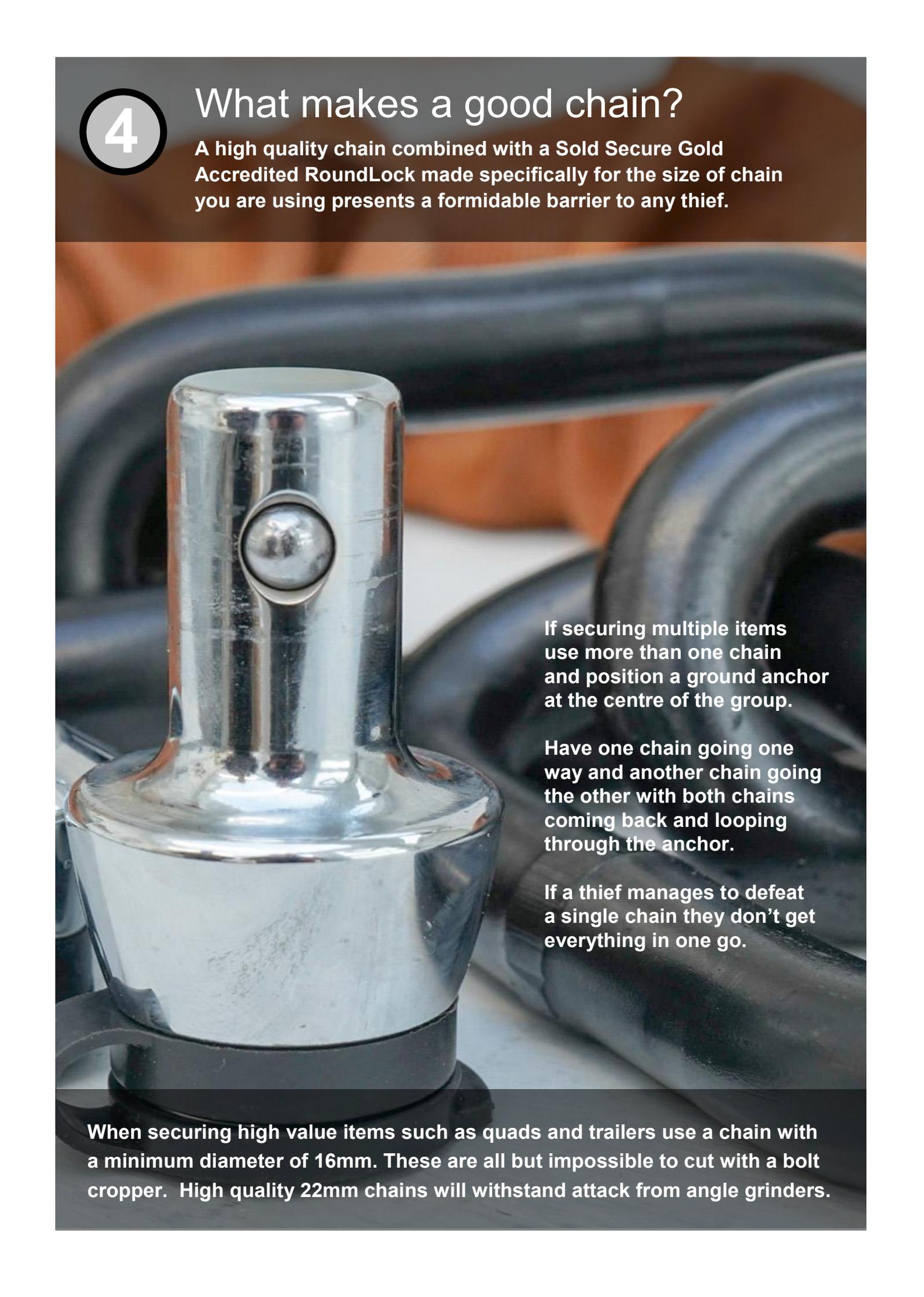
The law does not accept ignorance as a defence.

Follow this advice

- Don't give your bank account details to anyone unless you know and trust them.
- Be cautious of unsolicited offers of easy money.
- Research any company that makes you a job offer and make sure their contact details are genuine.
- Be wary of job offers from overseas. It will be harder for you to find out if they are legitimate.
- Be wary of job ads that are written in poor English with grammatical errors and spelling mistakes.

If it sounds too good to be true it probably is.

Visit www.moneymules.co.uk to find out more



4

What makes a good chain?

A high quality chain combined with a Sold Secure Gold Accredited RoundLock made specifically for the size of chain you are using presents a formidable barrier to any thief.

If securing multiple items use more than one chain and position a ground anchor at the centre of the group.

Have one chain going one way and another chain going the other with both chains coming back and looping through the anchor.

If a thief manages to defeat a single chain they don't get everything in one go.

When securing high value items such as quads and trailers use a chain with a minimum diameter of 16mm. These are all but impossible to cut with a bolt cropper. High quality 22mm chains will withstand attack from angle grinders.



What makes a good padlock?

Hardened boron alloy steel closed shackle. The 'shackle' is protected in the body of the padlock giving cut and twist resistance.

Anti-drill protection on cylinder Solid hardened steel lock body

Anti-corrosion storm proof cover

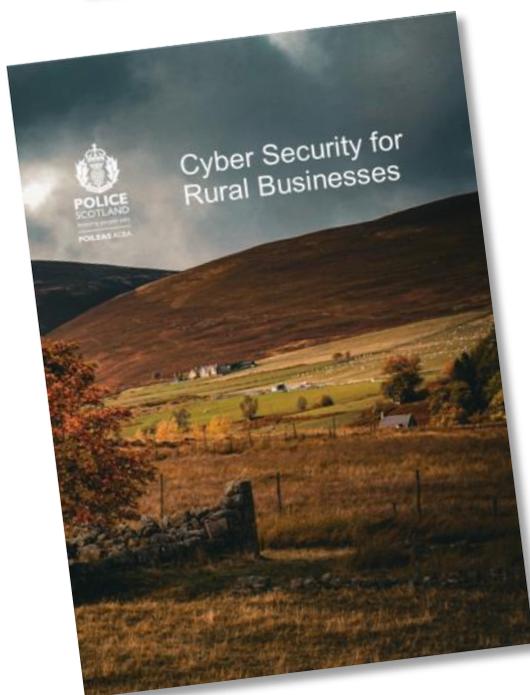
The North East Crime Reduction team always recommend using a 'closed shackle padlock' but what exactly does that mean?

What makes a good hasp & staple?

Be wary of those that are made from thin material - especially the staple (the 'eye' that the padlock fits through) as this is frequently the attack route for thieves.

Always ensure both sides are bolted through. Don't just use wood screws.

Quality hasp sets have a vertical staple eye. This allows a closed shackle padlock to hang properly. A horizontal eye means a closed shackle lock will protrude outwards making it more vulnerable to attack with a hammer.



1 Back up your data

Think about how much you rely on your data such as customer details, quotes, orders and payment details. Now imagine how long you would be able to operate without them. Rural businesses should take regular backups of their important data and make sure that these backups are recent and can be restored. By doing this you're ensuring your business can still function following the impact of flood, fire, physical damage or theft.

Identify the data you really need

Identify your essential data - the information that your business couldn't function without. Normally this will be documents, photos, emails, contacts and calendars, most of which are kept in just a few common folders on your computer, phone, tablet or network.

Keep your backup separate from your computer

Whether it's on a USB stick, on a separate drive or a separate computer, access to data backups should be restricted so that they:

- are not accessible by staff
- are not permanently connected (either physically or over a local network) to the device holding the original copy.

Ransomware (and other malware) can often move to attached storage automatically, which means any such backup could also be infected. For more resilience you should consider storing your backups in a different location so fire or theft won't result in you losing both copies. Cloud storage solutions are a cost-effective and efficient way of achieving this.

Consider the cloud

You've probably already used cloud storage during your everyday work and personal life without even knowing. Using cloud storage (where a service provider stores your data on their infrastructure) means your data is physically separate from your location. Most providers offer a limited amount of storage space for free and larger storage capacity for minimal costs to small businesses.

Make backing up part of your everyday business

The majority of network or cloud storage solutions now allow you to make backups automatically. Using automated backups saves time and ensures you have the latest version of your files should you need them. When choosing a solution you'll have to consider how much data you need to back up and how quickly you need to be able to access the data following an incident.

North East Crime Reduction Team' guide to security in rural areas and cyber security for rural businesses.

Attached to this month's copy of Rural Matters are the North East Crime Reduction Teams' 'Guide to Security in the Rural Environment' and Cyber Security for Rural Businesses.' Both guides have been written by the Crime Reduction Team specifically for those living and working in the North East.

Criminals are increasingly focussing their activities online, targeting businesses of all sizes with false invoices, fake email accounts and fraudulent schemes. Our simple to follow guide will help keep your business safe online with advice on keeping your computer virus free and why it's important to keep your data backed up.



Flytipping can pose a threat to public health, wildlife and the environment. In Scotland over 60,000 instances of flytipping were recorded in 2022. Offenders can receive a fixed penalty notice of £200 and prosecution can lead to a fine and even a prison sentence.

Secure Your Property

Flytippers are more likely to target land or property that is easily accessible so it is important to secure your property by installing gates, fences and barriers.

Consider Installing CCTV

CCTV can capture footage of an area making it easier to identify and prosecute flytippers. There are a range of cameras now available which will operate without a direct power source or WiFi.

Signage

Signs should clearly state that flytipping is illegal and that those caught flytipping will face prosecution. can help you quickly detect and deal with it.

Report it Online

You can report flytipping online using the 'Dumb Dumpers' reporting tool.

www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/DumbDumpers

This service is provided by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and allows you to report flytipping anonymously. You can give details on the location and type of waste that has been dumped making it easier for the authorities to investigate. You can also call Dumb Dumpers on 0300 777 2292.

Contact Your Local Council

As a private landowner you are responsible for removing illegal waste from your land. You can still report flytipping to your local authority who can investigate and offer advice on how to remove it.

Stay Safe

Don't put yourself at risk when reporting flytippers. They know what they're doing is illegal and won't take kindly to being caught. Never intervene; only take notes or photos if you're confident you won't be spotted.

If the incident you report is on-going, is believed to be of a hazardous nature or is near a watercourse, the information will be passed to SEPA as well as Police Scotland.

Responsible Disposal of Waste

If you use a private contractor to remove household, garden or construction waste make sure that any waste produced on the property is only taken away by someone who is a registered waste carrier.

If you use a company which offers to dispose of your waste, you must make sure that the company is a SEPA-registered waste carrier and you should ask for paperwork for the disposal and ask the carrier exactly which licenced facility they intend to use to dispose of the waste.

If the company cannot provide this information you should seek to make an arrangement elsewhere. If your contracted waste carrier dumps your waste illegally then you could be held responsible.

If you are planning to hire a waste carrier you can check whether they are SEPA-registered by visiting the SEPA Wastecarriers website or by calling 0300 0996699.

Scam Update

Spyware & Adware



Spyware and Adware are two types of malware that can infect your computer or mobile device. Spyware is designed to monitor your online activity and collect personal data, such as your browsing history, passwords, and credit card numbers. Adware is designed to display unwanted advertisements, pop-ups and banners.

Spyware and Adware can be used to steal personal and financial information, such as your name, address, National Insurance number, and credit card numbers. This information can then be used to commit identity theft, such as opening new accounts, taking out loans in your name, making fraudulent purchases or transferring money from your account.

They are also used in ransomware, which is a type of malware that encrypts your files without your knowledge and demands a ransom payment in exchange for the decryption key.

How to Avoid Falling Victim

Use antivirus software

Download software from trusted sources.

Be careful about what links you click on.

Keep your software up to date.

Avoid sharing personal information online.

Only grant permissions to apps you trust.

Avoid connecting to public Wi-Fi.

IT'S SIMPLE LOCK IT OR LOSE IT



Register your bike for free at
www.bikeregister.com



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What's happening in Aberdeenshire & Moray

Ardoe

Between 14 May and 7 August 2023 a quantity of jewellery was stolen from a insecure rural property.

Kemnay

On 12 August 2023, the window of an observation hut at Dalmadilly Pond, Kemnay, was smashed and the door kicked.

Glenkindie

Between 10 and 12 August 2023 a Vogel Paver vehicle was damaged when the side panel and diesel cap was ripped off the vehicle which was being used locally for road maintenance on the Glenkindie to Gory road.

Mowtie

On 15 August 2023, a white Ford transit flatbed van was stolen whilst parked up on the laybay near Mowtie, Stonehaven. The vehicle has not been recovered.

Dufftown

Between 16 and 17 August 2023 an attempt was made to steal a New Holland Ford Tractor from an insecure farm outbuilding. Although the vehicle was not stolen damage was caused to the ignition cowling.

Kirkton of Maryculter

Two men aged 22 and 24 have been arrested and charged in connections with a spate of housebreakings in Blairs, Banchory–Devenick, Findon and Portlethen in August.

Huntly

Between 5 and 6 September 2023, a Green Yamaha Grizzly 450CC quad bike was stolen from a farm near Huntly.

Forres

On 11 September 2023 approximately 250 litres of diesel was stolen from a large commercial vehicle parked in a rural site outside Forres.

Grange, Keith

Between 13 and 17 September 2023, a Red Suzuki King Quad 400, 4x4 was stolen from a farmers field near Grange, Keith.

SIGN UP TO



Rural Watch SCOTLAND

We aim to ALERT you to:



Local crimes and emerging trends that may impact you and your community



Information on safety, resilience and community wellbeing



Prevention tactics to protect your home and business



Approved "Secured by Design" products and recommendations



Advice on how to secure your property, equipment and machinery



The opportunity to share best practice



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Delivered by Neighbourhood Watch Scotland



SPARC

SCOTTISH PARTNERSHIP AGAINST RURAL CRIME

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to register**

www.ruralwatchscotland.co.uk



Keeping Our Rural Communities Safe

Police Scotland's North East Division covers rural and urban areas in Moray, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City. The division has five territorial command areas which have their own dedicated Area Commander, who is responsible for the daily policing function. Each command area is served by a number of community policing teams whose activities are built around the needs of the local community. These teams respond to local calls and look for long term solutions to key issues. They are assisted by the division's Crime Reduction Unit who deliver against

Force and local priorities in a number of areas, including physical and social crime prevention, supporting and enhancing community engagement and creating and sustaining strong and effective partnership working.

Website

www.scotland.police.uk

Twitter

www.twitter.com/NorthEPolice

Facebook

[www.facebook.com/
NorthEastPoliceDivision](http://www.facebook.com/NorthEastPoliceDivision)

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