

ABOUT THIS MONITOR FARM

Farm name	Mill of Inverarity, Inverarity, Forfar, Angus, DD8 2JN
Meeting Number	16 – Rural Crime and Health and Safety
Meeting Date	Thursday 12 th December 2019
Next Meeting	
Report date	13 th December 2019

Mill of Inverarity Farm is run by The Stodart family and in total the business farms 358 hectares. The farm is a traditional mixed unit growing 130 hectares of cereals, with 160 spring calving suckler cows and an increasing breeding flock of 860 ewes. The business also annually buys in store cattle and lambs for finishing and has an operational laying hen enterprise on farm of 4,500 hens.

This monitor farm meeting looked at rural crime and health and safety on farm. The group participated in a farm walk where Vikki Crichton and Willie Johnstone from Tayside Police discussed rural crime and Jeremy Parker from NFU conversed with the group about how to create a safe working environment. The meeting concluded with a Police Scotland presentation on Wildlife Crime, particularly Hare Coursing.

Management Group: Graeme Mather, Fiona Lawson, Ian Pattullo, Neil McGowan, Stuart Lawrie, Duncan Wilson, Graeme Neill, John Kidd, Robin Norrie.

KEY MESSAGES

- Speak to the Police, even if it is a minor incident, it may be a small part of a big picture.
- Simple checks and regular health and safety briefings can improve farm safety for all.
- Ensure farms have as many deterrents as possible to prevent theft.
- Hare coursing is on the increase, if it is seen it must be reported to the police.

AREAS OF DISCUSSION Expand on two of the key messages discussed and what were the key concerns or innovations

- **Theft of Livestock:** Tayside Police started off the afternoon by speaking about the theft of livestock in Angus, an increasing issue across the UK. Thousands of animals are being stolen each year from farms across the country, many are never recovered. One member of the group asked about modern day traceability of animals, and the presence of a paper trail in restaurants or markets. Mr Johnstone replied saying thieves are very smart and understand how to retag and avoid prosecution. They are able to manipulate information, tags and passports so that livestock can be sold. In Angus however, animals are being stolen in very small numbers. These stolen animals are not always destined for slaughter. Mr Johnston gave an example, when pedigree Beltex sheep were stolen stating that It is very unlikely that these animals will be slaughtered for meat, but more likely to be sold back into a different farmers flock.

- **Diesel and Machinery Theft:** Theft of diesel and chemicals, particularly potato chemicals whose licences expire in the near future are on the increase. The people that are carrying out these thefts are becoming more and more organised. Before they carry out a theft they are likely to visit the farm first to work out exit strategies, when people are least likely to be around and find the chemical store. They do this in many ways including using drones, walking round steadings claiming to be lost, going to farmhouses asking if the farmer has any houses for rent or pretending to be a delivery driver. One member of the group asked if farmers are allowed to take photos of these individuals in case something was to happen or go missing. Members of Tayside Police stated that it is ok to do this on your own property, but be wary of posting it on social media as if the case does go to court it will not be used as evidence if it has been shared publicly.

Different ways to deter thieves were discussed such as the use of automatic lighting, CCTV and trackers. Although trackers can help to recover stolen goods, and CCTV can be of use to deter thieves, a low cost effective strategy is to hide machinery where possible. This may include keeping a quad bike hidden in a workshop with the keys kept in a safe and a larger machine parked in front of the door.

- **Hare coursing** is on the rise in Angus, it is generally carried out for gambling purposes and by the same groups of people. It was explained by Tayside Police that landowners must report hare coursing or any sort of suspicious activity such as people walking dogs like Lurchers in fields. If a hare is left it must be handed in for a post-mortem where they will try and obtain the dogs DNA from within the hare and compare this to previous dogs that have been DNA tested. It was advised to not confront these people on your own. If the hare coursing is an ongoing issue call 999 immediately as the police may be able to get out quicker. The gathering of evidence, including videos, descriptions of the people and vehicles, dogs and locations all aid the police to build a case.
- **Health and Safety:** Jeremy Parker from the NFU pointed out potential health and safety issues from around the farm. The biggest risk he thought was fire. Sheds full of straw and older sheds having an older style of wiring can be a huge issue. He explained if anyone thinks they have an issue with wiring, there is technology available to detect 'hot spots' within the wires where fires may start. Another fire issue may arise from solar panels on a shed roof. These cannot be switched off and are constantly producing electricity. If there is a fire in a shed it can make putting it out much more challenging. One of the main points of health and safety discussion was around tractors and trailers on the road. Mr Johnstone from Tayside police stated that if machinery is doing 50kph on the road then the trailer must be responsible for 40% of the braking, which means using commercial running gear on air brakes. Air brakes have a much greater braking power and have a failsafe if an airline was to blow. The general rule when using agricultural machinery on the road is that it must be safe. However, some farmers may not realise that a trailer is not fit for the road. Mr Parker stated that to make sure your machines are legal daily checks should be carried out, documented and kept in the tractor as it is no use being kept in the farm office.

FARMERS UPDATE Summarise the development of the initiatives on the farm

- The Stodarts have had two quad bikes stolen out of the same shed in a two year period, one was at night the other in broad daylight during a Highland Show day.
- After the first theft keys were put into a key safe overnight, however this safe was not robust enough and was broken into.
- The Stodarts have now installed CCTV around the yard and have laser beams across the entrances to the farm. When these lasers are broken throughout the night a text message or phone call lets Rob know what is going on.
- The quad bike now has a tracker and a data tag on it. If the quad bike moves without the key in it, Rob is alerted that it may have been stolen.
- There is no key kept in any machine overnight, they are now kept in a secure key safe.

ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING Bullet points outlining what will be done between now and the next meeting

- The business group continues to enter their data ahead of the bench marking meeting in January.

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