



**Harper Adams
University**



**Rural Security
Research Group**

Farm Crime Report to Industry



**Behavioural Science and Farm Crime Prevention Decision
Making: understanding the behavioural culture of farmers in
England and Wales**

Key Findings

May 2019

Dr Kreseda Smith, Harper Adams University

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Executive Summary

Farms in England and Wales continue to have low levels of crime prevention measures in use despite the increasing threat, and what is used is often ineffective. As such, there is a clear need to employ different decision-making models in crime prevention advice for farmers.

The principal aim of this research was to explore and better understand the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes of farmers towards crime, crime prevention, the police, and insurers. Moreover, an attempt to understand how farmers make decisions about crime prevention, what factors influence those decisions, and how this compares to approaches the police are taking to tackle farm crime.

Results show an impasse between how the police are tackling farm crime and prevention, and the needs of the farmers. This results in farmers believing the police treat them as second-class citizens, and so they do not engage with crime prevention despite knowing they should. Further, farmers do not report crimes to the police as they feel they will not get a response, and it is a waste of their time.

This research concludes that there is much the police, insurers, and the media can do to better respond to farm crime. Moreover, this research is the first to identify key factors affecting farmer attitudes and beliefs towards farm crime, farm crime prevention, the police, and their insurers, and the psychological impact of farm crime among farmers. It is argued that the findings of this research support the use of behavioural science to improve the uptake of appropriate and effective crime prevention on-farm in light of the relative failure of traditional policy.

List of Acronyms Used in the Report

BS	Behavioural Science
CPA	Crime Prevention Advisor
E&W	England and Wales
FCP	Farm Crime Prevention
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner

Background

Farms continue to experience profoundly depressing levels of crime¹, and the impact of farm crime reverberates far beyond the immediate rural community, affecting employment, food prices and food traceability². Despite the recent efforts of police forces across E&W to address the issues faced by rural communities, the continuing reality is that crime numbers in urban areas are much higher than in rural areas³, and as such, this is where police resources tend to focus.

The reporting of the cost of rural crime in the UK is currently carried out by annual reports of NFU Mutual insurance claims data, rather than police crime data, simply because the latter does not exist on a national basis. Figure 1 shows the cost of rural crime insurance claims in the UK for the last nine years. The latest NFU Mutual Rural Crime Survey puts the cost of rural crime in 2017 £44.5m⁴, and the National Rural Crime Survey⁵ reports rural crime costing the UK an estimated £800m.

¹Relf, T. 2018. <https://www.fwi.co.uk/news/rural-crime-costs-hit-five-year-high>

²Chalfin, A., Roman, J., Mears, D.P., Scott, M.L. 2007. *The Costs of Benefits of Agricultural Crime Prevention*. Urban Institute Justice Policy Center: Florida State University College of Criminology and Criminal Justice.

³Defra. 2012. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/227013/Crime_Aug_2013.pdf

⁴NFU Mutual. 2018. <https://www.nfumutual.co.uk/farming/rural-crime/>

⁵NRCN. 2015. <http://www.nationalruralcrimenetwork.net/research/internal/national-rural-crimes-survey2015/>

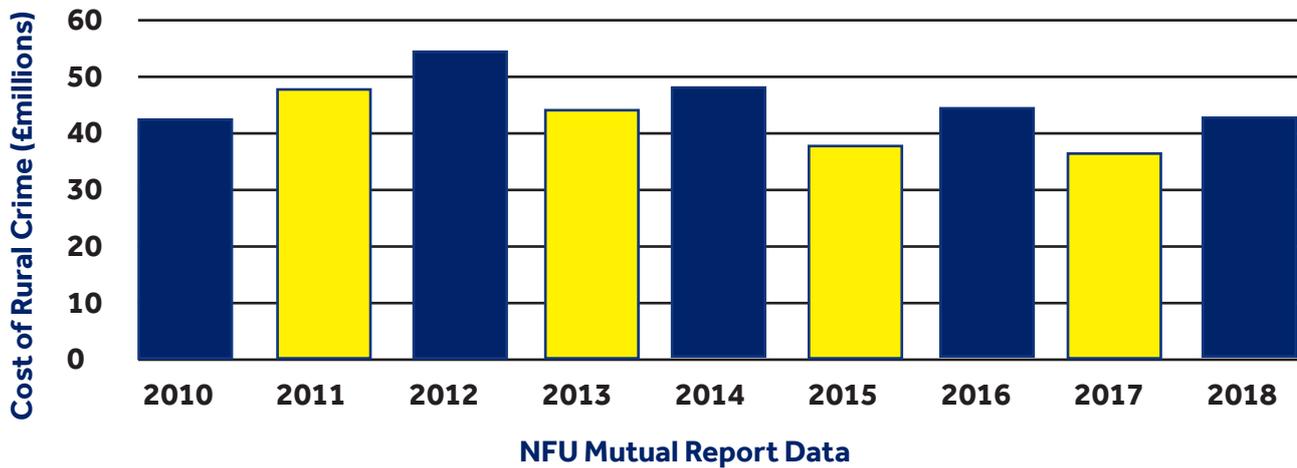


Figure 1: Cost of Rural Crime in the UK as Reported by NFU Mutual, 2010-2018
(Source: NFU Mutual)

In an attempt to deter criminals from targeting their property, farmers across the UK are increasingly turning towards various crime prevention methods to protect their farms⁶. However, not all farmers are adopting crime prevention⁷, and where they are using these methods, it is often the case that these measures are inadequate and ineffective for the individual farms⁸.

It is suggested that a different approach may be available to farmers thinking about how they can best protect their farm. By enabling farmers to think differently about their farm and the crime prevention options available to them, farms may become a less attractive target to criminals. The key approach suggested by this research is the potential application of concepts from BS as an alternative to traditional policy tackling farm crime, and to enable farmers to be in a position to make effective and appropriate FCP decisions.

Several benefits could be realised for farmers by enabling the choice of the most effective crime prevention measure(s) for their own individual farms. The possibility of using these approaches within this field could provide a step change in how farmers protect their property, and therefore, in the longer term, potentially improve the profitability of the farm.

To establish whether BS can be recommended in FCP decision-making, one first must establish the underlying thoughts, feelings, and attitudes of the farmers. This research explores the factors that influence the attitudes and beliefs of farmers around crime prevention measures on farms, levels of victimisation and repeat victimisation among the farming community, and attitudes towards the police in E&W. Such understanding enables a discussion around the role of BS in FCP decision-making in light of the relative failure of other methods aimed at improving the uptake of crime prevention.

⁶Mears, D.P., Scott, M.L., Bhati, A.S. 2007. A Process and Impact Evaluation of the Agricultural Crime, Technology, Information, and Operations Network (ACTION) Program. Washington DC: The Urban Institute

⁷Yarwood, R. and Edwards, W. 1995. Voluntary action in rural areas: The case of neighbourhood watch. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 11(4), pp. 447-460. DOI: 10.1016/0743-0167(95)00030-5.

⁸McCall, M. & Homel, P. 2003. http://www.aic.gov.au/media_library/publications/tandi2/tandi268.pdf

Methodology

This research has been the first to explore the attitudes and beliefs of farmers towards farm crime, crime prevention, the police, and their insurers in E&W. Moreover, it has provided clarity on the real impact of farm crime upon farmers, validated by a quantitative survey with farmers across E&W, acting as an initial scoping survey to identify key aspects relating to farm crime that required further exploration.

A range of qualitative methodologies provided this further exploration: interviews with PCCs and CPAs across four police forces in England, and case studies with farmers made up of focus groups, one-to-one semi-structured interviews, attitudinal statement analysis, and a comparative content analysis of media reports of farm crime and the discussions undertaken with farmers.

The aim of this research was three-fold:

1. Firstly, to ascertain levels of farm crime across E&W, along with an insight into farmers' attitudes towards, and confidence in, the police and insurers, how this affects levels of crime reporting, and how this compares to the approaches taken by the police towards farm crime;
2. Secondly, to explore the attitudes, feelings, and beliefs surrounding crime and crime prevention use among farmers of E&W; and
3. To establish the factors that influence the crime prevention decision-making process of farmers.

Key Findings

The main findings of this research are detailed, addressing the three key project aims.

What are the levels of farm crime in E&W, and what is the impact of these crimes

Levels:

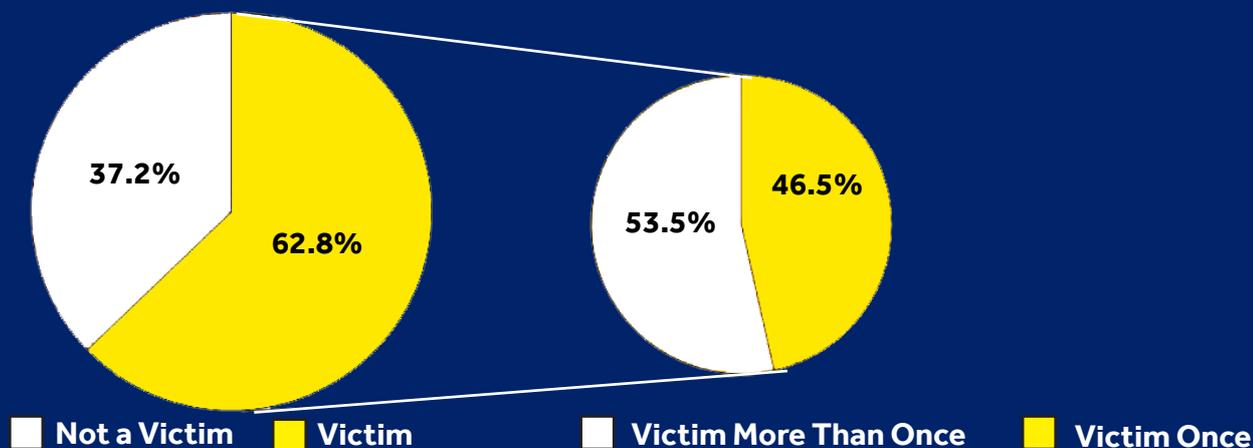


Figure 2: Survey participant victimisation and repeat victimisation levels

•62.8% of participants had been a victim of crime, and of those 53.5% had been a victim on more than one occasion (Figure 2);

•Small farms (those less than 250 Hectares), and isolated farms were more likely to be victimised more than once;

•The presence of people on farm seems to make little difference in the likelihood of being a victim.

Impact:

- Farmers believe offenders were mostly local. Farmers also recognised the role market forces play in farm crime, e.g. increased theft of Land Rover Defenders following the end of production. However, there were still those who thought criminals were foreigners or from the travelling community, even if they have no proof. Farmers openly admitted to worries about delivery drivers, and farmers and farm workers are openly accused of crimes.
- Fear of crime was rising, with geographic and social isolation, criminals using technology, violent repercussions, what was taken/how it was taken/where it was taken from, all affecting fear of crime. Increasing fear of crime could lead to poor decision-making and negative choices, which may affect the use of appropriate and effective crime prevention.
- Farm crime may be creating a rural contra-masculinity, with the psychological impact being so great that some farmers have considered giving up farming because of crime.
- Farm crime has a major psychological impact on farmers. Crime erodes trust, not just towards strangers, but also towards friends. Farmers admitted they cannot sleep because of fear of repeat victimisation, but accepted this as part of being a farmer. The prolonged psychological impact of farm crime may lead to issues with the physical health of farmers.

Does the level of confidence farmers have in the police affect the likelihood of farmers reporting these crimes?

- There is a lack of consistency in how police define rural crime, with some forces treating all crime the same which is not reflected by farmers' experiences. Moreover, this is leading to inconsistencies in the recording of farm crime by police, thus suggesting the need for training for call handlers and CPAs. Some PCCs state that the responsibility of protecting farms is down to the farmers.
- 68% of farmers report crimes to the police, and only 40% report to their insurers. Despite this, over 80% of participants felt the police were not doing enough to tackle farm crime. Most participants felt the police and government response to farm crime was inadequate, and 1/3 felt their insurers were not providing adequate crime prevention advice.
- Farmers were unanimously negative about police feedback, poor or inconsistent messaging services, and a lack of police commitment to keep messaging services going in the long-term.



If farmers are using crime prevention measures, what measures are being used?

- There was a mixed response towards FarmWatch schemes. Support depended upon a proactive coordinator, the Watch needed to be proactive and not reactive to a particular problem, and required long-term buy-in from the police.
- Farmers felt that crime prevention was seen as a sport for criminals, with the excitement of beating the crime prevention farmers put in place being a key motivator for criminals.
- Farmers were more likely to use low-tech crime prevention. The main reasons for using crime prevention were how easy it is to get to the farm, and victimisation, both direct and indirect.

What are the factors influencing farmer crime prevention decision-making?

- The main sources of crime prevention information for farmers were the police and insurers, despite feeling both could do more to tackle farm crime. Other sources of information included the media, particularly the farming press despite the impact on fear of crime, other farmers, and farming organisations such as the NFU, however it is questionable that such advice was consistent.
- Farmers put off crime prevention due to the cost and time involved, but they recognised it was getting easier to protect their farms.

•Police felt farmers were more likely to be receptive to crime prevention when they have been a victim. However, farmers suggested that even when they have been a victim, they still do not adopt crime prevention. Despite victimisation being a key influencing factor in crime prevention decision-making, this research also found that farmers' wider experiences, 'gut instinct', and the possibility of crime prevention being multi-purpose aided decisions.

•Police recognised that farmers have done things the same way for decades and resent change. However, farmers were aware there was a problem and that something had to be done about it.

Can the findings be used to improve the appropriate, effective crime prevention decision-making of farmers?

- The advice provided must be suitable and effective for the individual farm, tailored to the farm, and provided by a trusted messenger.
- By providing adequate and complete information about crime prevention the police could encourage more farmers to use these methods. Furthermore, crime prevention advice needs to go beyond protecting physical property, as farmers also displayed worries about things like cybercrime.
- Female farmers were more likely to try new crime prevention methods, and talk to non-farming friends about crime prevention. Furthermore, this research also shows that older farmers felt that crime prevention was more time consuming.
- Farmers discussed the potential for crime prevention cooperatives and peer mentors for information sharing among local farming communities. Furthermore, framing crime prevention options as ways to avoid losses, may improve uptake.

Recommendations

This research has identified recommendations for key stakeholders to consider in light of the findings of this work.

- Based on survey participant responses, it is estimated that approximately 137,000 farmers in the UK will have been victimised, of those 73,000 have been victimised more than once. Therefore, there is a need for stakeholders to recognise that farm crime needs to be considered as serious crime and allocate resources accordingly.
- There are a range of offenders identified by farmers, but there is a need to better understand the increasing role of Organised Criminal Groups in farm crime.
- Fear of crime is rising, exacerbated by the very nature of farms. PCCs, CPAs and other key stakeholders must address these fears, and the factors that influence these fears, to reduce poor decision-making among farmers.
- All stakeholders need to have a better understanding of the psychological impact farm crime has on farmers, and the wider implications of this, and should address these aspects more thoroughly as early as possible.
- More consistency is needed at a national level on the definition of rural crime and farm crime to enable accurate recording of these crimes, and therefore more reliable datasets on which to base future analyses and strategies.
- Low-tech FCP is being used widely, but a range of FCP is being used in a variety of combinations. However, farmers are aware of the limitations of most measures. This is indicative of the heterogeneous nature of farmers, and the need for tailored FCP advice to avoid the need for farmers to get FCP off the internet without any guidance and without knowing if it is likely to be effective for their farm.
- There is a need to move away from a reliance on FarmWatch schemes, or rethink how they are coordinated. Farmers are aware of them, but not all seem to be positive about the efficacy. If a FarmWatch would suit a certain location, then it may be adopted, but the police should be guided by the community members.
- It must be recognised that, just because a farmer has been a victim, it does not necessarily mean they will be more likely to adopt/improve FCP. It is suggested that improved communication between farmers, police, and insurers may help, and that a follow-up with farmers who have been victims would be beneficial in aiding their FCP decision-making.

