

## **Wiltshire Police Rural Crime Team**

The Rural Crime Team (RCT) is a highly skilled team of individuals whose aim is to provide the rural community with a single point of contact, whilst offering specialist policing advice and guidance. The dedicated team deals with the specific rural crimes that affect our most isolated communities. Rural crime can be broken down into four main types:

- Heritage Crime
- Environmental Crime
- Wildlife Crime
- Agricultural Crime

The RCT, which consists of 2 x full time PC's and is supported by trained wildlife crime officers (WCO), who in turn support our Community Policing Teams (CPT) with their improved knowledge of rural and wildlife related offence. The team also help run Farm Watch and Horse Watch. These schemes encourage the sharing of information, partnership working and help provide crime prevention advice. Horse watch has been re-launched through community messaging with the assistance of the Community watch co-ordinator. This has seen newsletters being sent out to highlight crime trends and awareness of prevention measures.

The force has recently invested in the training of 20 officers at Lackham college by a wildlife crime trainer. This will enhance the forces response to Wildlife crime investigations. A further 25 wildlife crime officers will be trained in November 2019. This will result in doubling the current expertise around the county.

The Rural Crime Partnership (RCP) for Swindon and Wiltshire is now fully established and meets on a quarterly basis. The aim of the Partnership is to bring together representatives from a number of organisations to provide coordination and strategic leadership in tackling rural crime issues. The aims of the Partnership include:

- Reducing the number of victims of rural crime
- Improving the confidence of rural communities in reporting crimes knowing that action will be taken
- Reducing offending and re-offending
- Strengthening the Partnership over time to improve outcomes for all communities across Wiltshire.

The partnership is seen as the flagship in the region and other forces have visited Wiltshire to observe the RCP forum in action.

In July two national strategies were launched by the National Police Chiefs Council in conjunction with a number of partner agencies, for Rural crime and Wildlife Crime. The RCT will be looking to ensure that we are working to and achieving those objectives set within the strategies.

The RCT sits on the SW regional Rural crime group and also has an input into the National Poaching Priority group. Both groups seek to share information and best practices to help educate the public and disrupt those breaking the law.

A number of proactive Operations have been run by the RCT, in conjunction with CPT's. Operation Artemis (national priority) is the force response to all aspects of poaching. This will be the second year Op Artemis is run within Wiltshire; last year there were 22 arrests within Wiltshire, leading to 16 successful prosecutions against individuals.

In September 2018 Wiltshire Police collaborated with MOD and the volunteer Special Constabulary for Operation Aston which resulted in bikes seized under section 165 of the Road Traffic Act for not being road legal & being driven on an MOD area where the public aren't permitted.

In addition, the Wiltshire Rural Crime team supports Operation Clampdown, working closely with the Angling Trust and the Environment Agency focusing on tackling fishing offences.

A recent rural survey also identified people's concerns with Fly tipping and the Force are currently working with trading standards to deal with this issue.

A Drone has been purchased from funding provided by Historic England and the NFU to help to assist in the prevention and detection of rural crime. Both Rural crime officers are to be trained in the use of Drone.

We are currently looking at setting up a scheme within Wiltshire (as in Suffolk) that have 25 horse riders (with own horses) spread out within Wiltshire that are extra eyes and ears for the rural community. To have a basic input on recognising hare coursing heritage crime and wildlife crime. Historic England already offered funding for tabards and horse owners have own insurance etc. so this should incur no cost to the force.

The RCT have continued media awareness around issues such as Livestock worrying (national priority), Fishing poaching, Poaching, thefts from farms.

A number of TV appearances for the RCT, including Country file (highlighting working gun dog thefts), ITV / BBC news (highlighting Op ARTEMIS), local BBC radio stations (highlighting livestock worrying) and patrols with BBC radio 4. Local newspaper and rural based publications, including Shooting times and Wiltshire life have also run articles around Op ARTEMIS and Working dog thefts.

The RCT have continued to develop the use of social media helping to communicate to farming communities through the creation of a closed Facebook page and a number of What's App groups. The page now has over 300 members and is continuing to grow.