

# RuralMatters

POLICE SCOTLAND

Keeping our Rural Communities Safe

February 2024



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Keeping people safe

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Welcome to the February 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

Wildlife Officer Constable Hannah Corbett and Country Officer for BASC Scotland Cameron Balfour look at one of the oldest shooting sports in Britain and give advice on best practise.

Detective Chris Piggott from the National Construction and Agricultural Theft Team explains how they are working to combat theft by organised crime gangs across the UK.

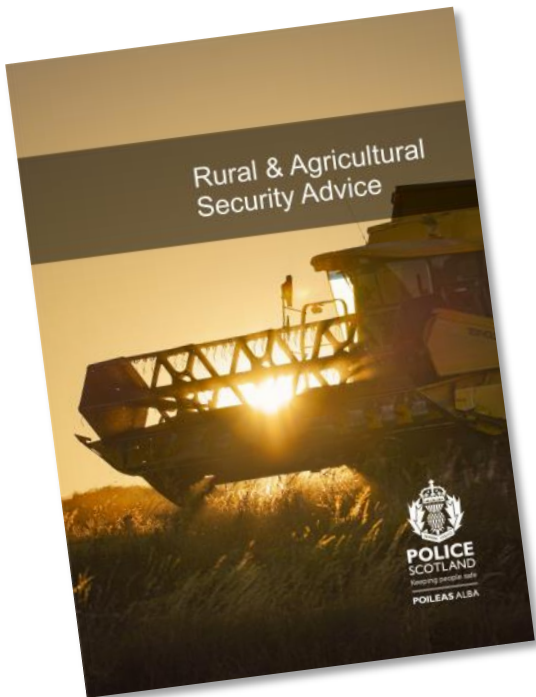
One of the best ways to ensure the recovery of your machinery if it is stolen is to fit a tracker. We look at the SBD accredited ATVTrac.

Do you own a firearm? We take a look at the latest campaign by the National Crime Agency to remind firearms users of good practise.

As well as a round-up of the latest crime affecting Moray and Aberdeenshire.

*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.*



# UPDATED for 2024 - The North East Crime Reduction Teams' Rural and Agricultural Security Advice

Attached to this month's copy of Rural Matters is the updated North East Crime Reduction Teams' 'Rural and Agricultural Security Advice' booklet. The new guide takes into account changing crime trends and looks to address the most common types of theft in the North East. Each section features a QR code that takes

readers to the Secured By Design website where they can watch videos and get information on products to protect their properties. Our simple to follow cyber security 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.

A black dog is sitting upright in a field of tall, dry grass. To its right, a rifle with a wooden stock and a black barrel lies on the ground. In the foreground, a dead goose with grey and white feathers and an orange beak is lying on its side. The scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment with warm, golden light.

Wildfowling is not for the faint hearted.  
It is cold, wet and muddy and takes place  
during the winter months.

## Wildlife Matters

By PC Hannah Corbett



There are three species of goose that can be legally shot - Grey lag, Pink foot and Canada.

**Wildfowling season in Scotland is the legal shooting of many ducks and three geese species.**

**Wildfowling is not for the faint hearted. It is cold, wet and muddy and takes place during the winter months.**

In Scotland, the season runs from 1st September to 31st January (above the height of an ordinary spring tide) and from 1st September to 20 February on the foreshore (below the height of an ordinary spring tide) and normally takes place between dawn and dusk.

Wildfowling is not allowed on Sundays or Christmas Day.

There are a variety of duck species that can be legally shot, although the main quarry species are mallard, teal and wigeon.

Wildfowling should be aware of the quarry they are allowed to shoot and be able to differentiate between bird species, all shot birds should be recovered quickly and the injured ones dispatched swiftly.

If there is any doubt about what the species is then shots should not be taken. Ignorance does not exclude the law.

The use of lead shot is not allowed over wetlands and the foreshore.

It is important that shooters: have permission from the land owner or through club membership, boundaries are adhered to and permits are purchased if required. There are some areas in Scotland where club membership is not required and more information about these sites can be found on the BASC website.

Wildfowling predominately takes place during the dark and in wet/marshy areas, with many shooters choosing to go out alone with their trusty dog, so safety is imperative.

### **Before going out shooting**

Telling a friend/family member where you're going.

Taking a mobile telephone with a fully charged battery.

Downloading the What 3 Words (W3W) app as this can help emergency services pinpoint your location should you need assistance.

Check your weapon before leaving the house, as it is easier to see an issue in the light.

Research the area, making sure you know the boundaries and what other wildlife is present in that location.

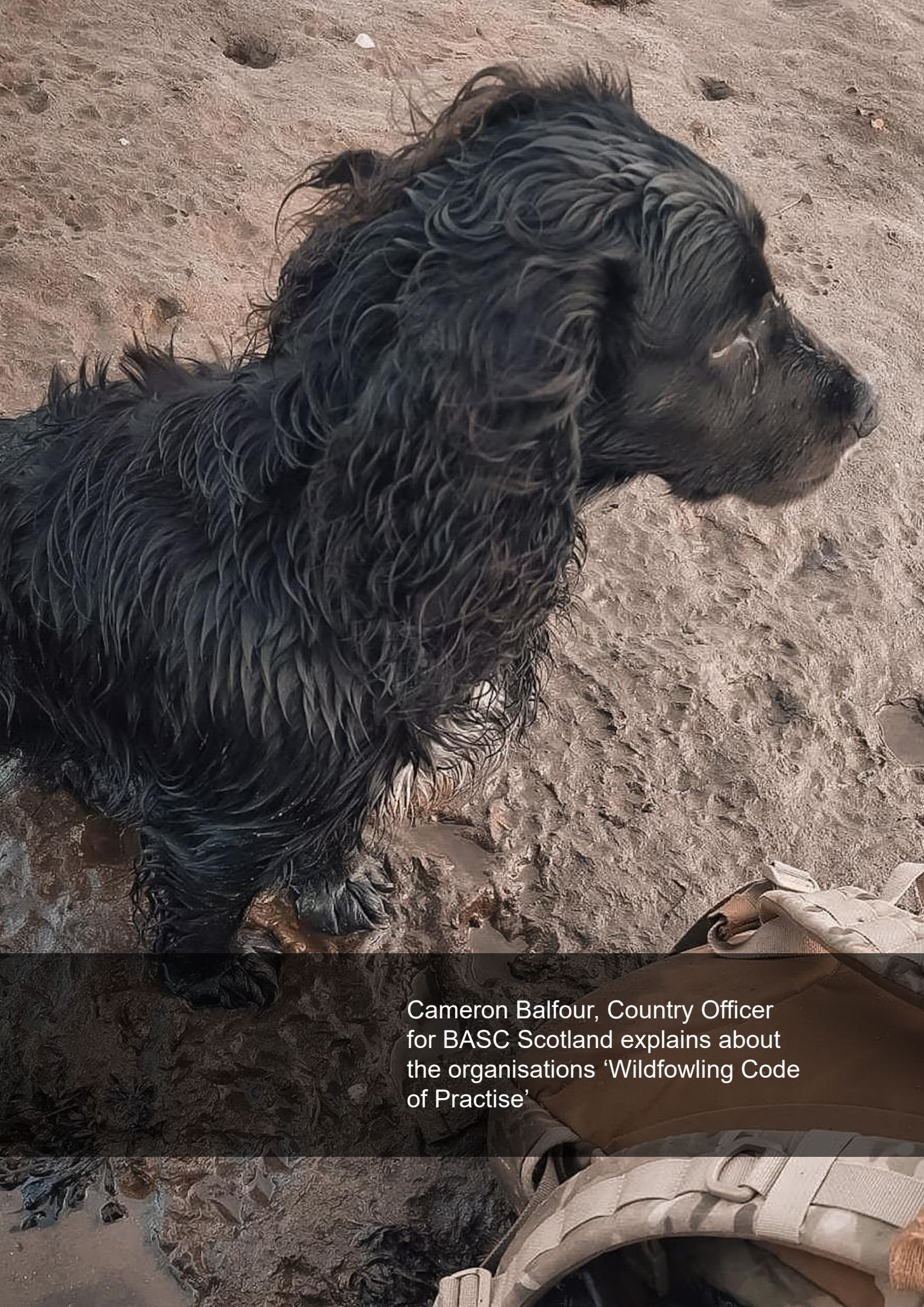
When you're out shooting, please try and be mindful of local residents and avoid parking in such a manner that blocks driveways/access routes/farm entrances and never shoot in the immediate vicinity of houses or in a way that endangers other people.

Please remove all rubbish and collect spent cartridges before leaving the area.

If you are out walking in areas which are used for wildfowling then please be respectful of others, follow the safety information on signs (if they are present) and do not deliberately put yourself in harm's way by walking in front of shooters, or getting close to them.

If you believe that a crime is taking place, then stand back, observe and contact the Police, do not approach the shooters.

More information about wildfowling, the good code of practice and recipe ideas can be found at [www.basc.org.uk](http://www.basc.org.uk)



Cameron Balfour, Country Officer for BASC Scotland explains about the organisations 'Wildfowling Code of Practise'



BASC has produced a 'Wildfowling Code of Practice,' which outlines sustainable shooting practices, giving clear direction as to what is acceptable conduct when in the field.

Wildfowling is arguably the wildest and definitely the oldest shooting sport in the British Isles. It is also one of the most conservation-focused shooting disciplines. Wildfowling is renowned for being the custodians of the estuaries and have operated sustainably for generations. Wildfowling normally takes place at dawn and dusk but can occur at any time of day or night. A wildfowler's skill is to make the most of the opportunities presented through an understanding of the quarry's natural movement.

Good planning and preparation is an essential part to any wildfowling trip, not only to maximise your chances of success but also to ensure your safety. BASC recommends you consult a tide table before each trip, and carry a waterproof wristwatch (essential for timing the predicted state of the tide). Other pieces of useful safety equipment that most wildfowling carry includes a torch, compass, and a wading stick. Few wildfowling will head out without binoculars; useful for bird identification as well as marking shot quarry. A mobile phone can be useful but remember to ensure that the battery is fully charged and the phone is stored in a waterproof case before taking it on to the marsh.

Wildfowling must only shoot at quarry when it is safe to do so and not in the immediate vicinity of houses adjoining the shore; be aware of footpaths and never shoot in a way that endangers people using them. Quarry identification in low light levels and poor weather conditions is one of the hardest skills for any beginner wildfowler to master; if in doubt, don't shoot.



BASC strongly recommends the use of a competent gundog when wildfowling to aid with bird retrieval. All shot quarry should be retrieved, and always allow time for the retrieval of all shot birds before being pushed off by time or tide and having to leave the marsh.

As some of the quarry species are in decline throughout their migratory transit route, it is essential to shoot responsibly and carry out conservation work in the form of habitat creation and predator control where possible. BASC has several conservation projects benefiting waterfowl species including using wings from shot birds to assist in long term population trends, promoting members and clubs to install nest tubes, and research into Sarcocystis (aka rice breast disease).

If you have any questions about wildfowling please get in touch with the BASC Scotland office ([scotland@basc.org.uk](mailto:scotland@basc.org.uk))

**BASC Wildfowling Code of Practice:**  
<https://basc.org.uk/wildfowling/advice/wildfowling-code-of-practice/>



Detective Chris Piggott from the National Construction and Agricultural Theft Team explains how they are working to combat theft by organised crime gangs.

*Quad bikes stolen from Scotland and subsequently recovered in Durham in October 2023.*





The National Construction and Agricultural Theft Team (NCATT) was formed in January 2023 and have experts in specialist vehicle examination, international Police liaison and Organised Crime Group investigations.

Organised Crime Gangs are stealing GPS units in large numbers often causing thousands of pounds of damage to machinery in the process - cutting through wiring looms rendering machines unusable and smashing doors to gain entry. This is a Europe wide issue with offenders being sent to the UK to specifically target farms and agricultural dealerships.

Criminals work in small teams targeting properties that have been subject to hostile reconnaissance; the use of drones and open-source mapping easily identifies vulnerable properties and where equipment is stored.

They will travel the length and the breadth of the UK with one known offender being sighted in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland in just one week.

These items often end up for sale on auction sites with criminals posing as legitimate sellers or even setting up companies that appear to be genuine.

Sharing information with forces across the country and working with partner agencies such as Europol has been key to targeting offenders and recent arrests in Humberside resulted in sentences of 3 and 4 years for two males with 45 stolen units from several force areas recovered.

Recovery rates for quad bikes and ATV's are as low as 1 in 20. Frustratingly, some of the recovered stolen property will never find their way back to owners, as records had not been made of serial numbers when they were purchased.

NFU Mutuals' latest rural crime report they saw an increase of 22.1% in the cost of Rural Crime to 11.7 million pounds. Quad Theft cost 3 million pounds, GPS theft 1.8 million and trailer theft 2.9 million.

Recent supply chain issues, trading issues caused by Brexit, international disasters and the sanctions imposed on Russia have all created the perfect storm for thieves to capitalise on, stealing machinery to order and exporting them to innocent buyers or in some cases using them as currency for illicit goods. Some stolen machinery stays in the UK and is sometimes used for anti-social behaviour or as enablers for other crimes. Victims of crime are often subject to repeat thefts as thieves know victims will be replacing the equipment with new following an insurance claim.

The vast majority of recoveries of vehicles such as quads and ATV's are the result of owners having a tracking device fitted.

NCATT have been working with UK parliament to encourage the manufacturing industry to take the theft equipment seriously. In July 2023 the Equipment Theft Prevention Act, a private member's bill, reached Royal ascent and was approved by the King. This Act will require manufacturers to increase security on machinery by fitting immobilisation and forensically marking the items so that they are easier to identify.

It is hoped this legislation will be adopted by the Scottish Government.

### To prevent yourself becoming a victim of crime

Always secure vehicles and remove the keys.

Activate PIN security on GPS equipment.

If your system is not pin enabled consider using forensic marking equipment to deter thieves and enable equipment to be returned if later recovered.

Keep tractors and combines with GPS fitted stored out of sight when possible.

Remove GPS units and store securely when not in use

Record serial numbers and photograph equipment.



One of the best ways to increase the likelihood of your stolen machinery being recovered quickly is to fit a tracking device.

ATVTrac is a Secured by Design Accredited tracking system that can be fitted to pretty much any vehicle.

It is a dedicated security product, enabling owners of farm machinery to have a live link to their machines 24/7, regardless of location.

ATVTrac is endorsed by more than ten manufacturers with discounts available on insurance from the NFU.

Due to the units small physical size and internal battery it can be fitted to almost any piece of machinery. Thanks to an online portal and dedicated iPhone and Android apps, owners can check 24/7 for location and even see multiple assets on one screen - ideal for fleet operators.

For more information on ATVTrac visit [www.atvtrac.co.uk](http://www.atvtrac.co.uk)



Do you own a firearm?  
We take a look at the latest campaign by the  
National Crime Agency to remind firearms  
users of good practise.



**Licensed firearms holders are potential targets for criminals who will seek to undertake the theft of licensed firearms and/or shotguns and then potentially use firearms in criminality, sell them on for profit, or cause a threat to life in the wider community.**

The National Crime Agency are running a campaign which reminds us that good shotgun security practice could be beneficial and the campaign aims to prevent licensed firearms holders from becoming targets of criminality.

With the shooting season upon us this campaign should be a reminder licensed firearms are a wanted commodity by the criminal fraternity and remind us of what is good practice when it comes to security.

More than one hundred shotguns have been stolen in the UK in 2023. Every stolen shotgun presents a risk to our communities.

Ensure firearms are always secured, never left unattended and any suspicious activity is reported to police.

Holding a firearms licence may make your home an attractive target for criminals.

If you legally own a firearm, please ensure you comply with the terms of your licence or certificate.

#### **Please remember:**

Stay vigilant, always ensure that your shotguns and cartridges are stored securely and keys are discreetly located away from the cabinet itself.

Keep firearms locked and hidden when not being used.

If you legally own a firearm ensure you comply with the terms of your licence or certificate.

The Firearms Security Handbook defines the minimum standards for protecting firearms in transit, but further measures should be considered where practicable. For example, by securing them to the vehicle chassis or separating integral parts such as the fore-end or stock, from the rest of the firearm.

A shotgun left in an unattended vehicle is vulnerable to theft. If you do need to leave your vehicle then you may wish to consider removing and carrying integral components on your person to render the gun unusable in the event of theft.

**To access the Firearms Security Handbook visit**  
<https://nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/who-we-are/publications/489-home-office-firearms-security-handbook-2020/file>

**If you would like further home security advice please contact your local Crime Reduction Officer by emailing**  
[NorthEastCrimeReduction@scotland.police.uk](mailto:NorthEastCrimeReduction@scotland.police.uk)

# Scam Update

# Payment Diversion



Payment Diversion Fraud (PDF) is also known as Business Email Compromise (BEC) or Mandate Fraud. It involves criminals impersonating others, creating or amending invoices and diverting payments to bank accounts under control. Criminals target both businesses and individuals.

Due to the targeted nature of this fraud type, small and medium sized businesses, which often have less comprehensive IT security, are particularly vulnerable. In addition, individuals that are purchasing houses and are involved in large financial transactions are also at risk.

Protect yourself and your business against PDF by identifying the following red flags:

**Have you been asked to urgently process a payment that is large or unusual?**

**Have you been asked to change the bank details of an existing supplier or to set up a new supplier?**

**Is the language used in the email inconsistent with that of the genuine sender?**

**Does the body of the email or email address contain spelling mistakes?**

If you have any doubt about the transaction then do not transfer the money. Protect yourself by double-checking the payment request via an additional method using details from another source (such as text message, a phone call or in-person).

## How to Avoid Falling Victim

**Criminals spend hours researching you for their scams, hoping you'll let your guard down for just a moment.**

**Before acting just stop and think. It could protect you and your money.**

**STOP:** Taking a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information could keep you safe.

**CHALLENGE:** Could it be fake? It's ok to reject, refuse or ignore any requests for your financial or personal details. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.

**PROTECT:** Contact your bank immediately if you think you've fallen for a scam, don't feel ashamed or embarrassed - you are not alone. Reporting the incident to your bank and Police Scotland gives you the best chance of recovering your funds.



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# AFTER DARK

Housebreaking can be a traumatic experience.

Although housebreaking can occur at any time of year criminals will often take advantage of darker nights and shorter daylight hours.

For advice from your local Crime Reduction Officer contact 101.

#### **Lock the Door**

Obvious isn't it? But some people don't do it. Lock the door even if you're only out for a short time. If you have window locks, lock those too. Keep the door locked when you are at home. This stops criminals coming in if you are in another part of the house or garden.

Don't leave your keys on the inside of locks or just inside the door. If you have a spare key, don't leave it under a mat, plant-pot or other easy to spot place at home. Never keep house keys and car keys on the same ring.



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## What's happening in Aberdeenshire & Moray

### **Drumblade, Huntly**

On 1 January 1000 litres of domestic heating fuel was reported stolen from a farm in the Drumblade area.

### **Bainshole, Huntly**

On 6 January an L200 pick-up and two quad bikes were stolen from a farm in the Bainshole area. The L200 was recovered the next day in North Yorkshire.

### **Tarland**

On 6 January an Ifor Williams 550 horsebox was stolen from a rural property near Tarland.

### **Netherley, Stonehaven**

A person has been charged with a livestock worrying offence following an incident in the Netherley area near Stonehaven.

### **Inverurie**

On 10 November 100 litres of fuel were stolen from the tank of an excavator on a construction site near Inverurie.

### **Insch**

On 9 November a LMC Exquisite 695 caravan, valued at £30,000, was stolen from a secure compound near Insch.

### **Westhill**

Enquiries are ongoing following reports of a number of wild birds having been shot near Loch of Skene on 16 November.

### **Maud**

On 9 January efforts were made to steal fuel from a domestic heating tank at a rural property near Maud. Damage to the tank and a broken locked gate were found by the home owner.

### **Forglen, Turriff**

X5, five gallon drums of red diesel were stolen from a rural property in the Forglen area on 13 January.

### **Oldmeldrum**

Three off road motor bikes and a Suzuki quad were stolen from a secure container at a rural property in the Oldmeldrum area on 11 January. All of the bikes and the quad were recovered a short distance from the property.

### **Fyvie**

Two sheep were killed and two badly injured during a dog attack incident at a farm near Fyvie on 12 December.

### **Birnie, Moray**

A person has been charged with a livestock worrying incident after a dog killed a sheep at a farm near Birnie on 13 December.

### **Keith**

An Ifor Williams TT50K tipping trailer was stolen from a farm near Keith on 28 November.

### **Ballindalloch**

On 3 November 1000 litres of domestic heating oil was reported stolen from a rural property in the Ballindalloch area.

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# 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**



**Rural Watch  
SCOTLAND**

Delivered by Neighbourhood Watch Scotland



**SPARC**

SCOTTISH PARTNERSHIP AGAINST RURAL CRIME

**Sign up to Alerts  
to register**

[www.ruralwatchscotland.co.uk](http://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](http://www.scotland.police.uk)

## Twitter

[www.twitter.com/NorthEPolice](http://www.twitter.com/NorthEPolice)

## Facebook

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

## North East Division Crime Reduction Team

### Moray (Elgin)

PC Richard Russell  
[richard.russell@scotland.police.uk](mailto:richard.russell@scotland.police.uk)

### Aberdeen City (Nigg)

PC Mark Irvine  
[mark.irvine@scotland.police.uk](mailto:mark.irvine@scotland.police.uk)

### Aberdeenshire (Stonehaven)

PC Mike Urquhart  
[michael.urquhart@scotland.police.uk](mailto:michael.urquhart@scotland.police.uk)

### Wildlife Crime Officer (Elgin)

PC Hannah Corbett  
[hannah.corbett@scotland.police.uk](mailto:hannah.corbett@scotland.police.uk)



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