

## Avon & Somerset Police

### **New text number to combat rural crime - 81819**

We have launched a new text service today, 17/01, to help us prevent and detect rural crime.

We are asking rural communities and businesses to help us by providing information and intelligence about suspected crime in their area.

The new number will allow the public to text information directly to the Rural Crime Team, who will be able to assess and action the intelligence quickly and efficiently.

Inspector Joanna Mines, from the Rural Crime Team in Somerset, said: “We are trialling the number for three months.

Many people who belong to our FarmWatch scheme had said they wanted a facility to be able to pass on information and respond to messages quickly, and this new number will allow that.

“We want to hear from anyone who has information about any suspicious or potentially criminal activity in their area, for example - details of people/vehicles seen behaving suspiciously, potentially stolen goods or livestock being offered for sale either to the public or at markets, sightings of stolen vehicles we might put out an alert for.

“No matter how small or insignificant people may think information is, it may be a vital piece of a jigsaw that helps us fill in the gaps and either prevent a crime or bring offenders to justice.

“We have had real success using a text number to facilitate reporting of drink drivers in the past and we hope this will prove as effective.”

Messages are currently sent out via text message and email to members of the Neighbourhood, Farm and Horse Watch schemes to alert them to crimes and incidents in their area. This new number will allow people to text back information quickly and easily.

Anyone can use it if they have information about rural or agricultural crime in their area, and isn't just for Watch members.

The launch of the number happens to coincide with a recent livestock theft in Somerset (16/01) and we are hoping that the public will help provide vital information to help the investigation. 40 calves, 10-15 months old, of Friesian/Limousin/Angus breeds were stolen from Henton, near Wells. The calves had been wormed using Bimectin the day before and it's therefore vital they don't get into the food chain.

Police and Crime Commissioner Sue Mountstevens said: "Rural crime affects the livelihoods of farmers, smallholders and rural businesses and presents some real challenges for the wider rural areas. I know the Rural Crime Team, working closely with our local communities are committed to tackling and preventing crime.

"I know from speaking to residents and farmers that there is a real desire to engage with the police when it comes to tackling rural crime. I'm sure that by providing an appropriate way for our rural communities to contact the police with intelligence will make a real difference to ensuring our countryside is safe and feels safe."

The number won't be monitored 24/7 but the team will be looking at it when they are on duty, it therefore shouldn't be used for reporting crimes, or anything which requires an immediate police attendance. In those circumstances please dial 999.

The new number is 81819, please text us any information you believe could either help prevent or detect a crime in your area.

You can still pass on information via the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. They never ask your name or trace your call.