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Rural Crime Awareness Day to be held in Rettendon

Essex Police and the farming community are holding a Rural Crime Awareness Day in Rettendon on Tuesday, June 19, 2012 and everyone is welcome to attend to learn how to protect their land and property from criminals.

The event is strongly supported by local farmers and members of the rural community, and was originally suggested at a meeting of the Chelmsford Farm Watch Group. Sgt Jan Bloomfield, Crime Reduction Officer Trisha Staerck and Essex Watch Liaison Officer Brenda Cross have worked closely with partners in the local community, and the event will feature expert advice from a range of specialists on combating rural crime.

Typical rural crimes include:

- ▶ theft of metal and tools
- ▶ theft of diesel and oil
- ▶ theft of machinery and plant
- ▶ theft of quadbikes
- ▶ theft of batteries

The Rural Crime Awareness Day will be held from 10am and 2pm at Highlands Farm, Southend Road, Rettendon CM3 8EB.

A key part of the fight against rural crime is Farm Watch.

Chief Inspector Steve Ditchburn, Chelmsford & Maldon District Commander, said: "We're privileged in having some beautiful countryside in Essex, with very strong rural and farming communities. Rural crime is comparatively low, but it presents its own particular challenges. By keeping communities talking and making everyone aware of the best means of preventing crime, we can reduce the opportunities for criminals and increase our chances of bringing offenders to justice.

"Essex Police has a very strong Farm Watch scheme, which is a central part of our strategy for keeping our countryside safe. We are able to circulate important information directly to Farm Watch members via text and email, and I would encourage all farmers in Essex to join the scheme."

Brenda Cross, Essex Watch Liaison Officer for the Chelmsford, Braintree and Maldon districts, agrees: "Those persons who enter farm land to commit crime within Essex are not welcome and they should be aware that they will be watched and reported.

"Farm Watch schemes have been in operation in parts of Essex for some years, and the schemes now extend across the county. Essex Police work in partnership with the rural farming community, providing crime reduction advice, regular updates and local alerts by farmers email families.

"Suspicious persons who visit farms are noted by all farmers who are part of the group and this information is shared with the police. This information is then disseminated to all farmers who have registered with Farm Watch across Essex, and is also passed to neighbouring forces. Intelligence that is received has resulted in arrests being made. Essex Police has many resources on hand to deal with rural crime including the police helicopter.

"Through working in partnership, the scheme encourages everyone in the farming community to be extra vigilant and report anything suspicious to the police. "

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The farming community is highly enthusiastic about the event.

Patrick Wreathall, Chairman of the Chelmsford Farm Watch Group, adds: "This day will be a wonderful opportunity to bring together the farming community, along with the agricultural dealers who have pledged their support for this event. It is also an opportunity for the crime prevention people, namely the police, to meet farmers and discuss the problems that both sides face regarding rural crime.

"As Chairman of the Chelmsford Farm Watch group I have been very impressed with the attitude of the police, but it is impossible for them to react without farmers reporting back to them. Hopefully this open day will help all parties to combat rural crime."

Robert Stacey of the National Farmers Union adds: "Rural crime is costing millions of pounds every year whether it be metal, fuel, machinery or just burglaries it effects us all. So I hope that those who attend the event will not only find it interesting they will also pick up some ideas to help make their property more secure. Thank you to Essex Police, especially Brenda Cross, for organising the day and to David and Janice Chennells for hosting it."

Many of Essex Police's crime fighting experts, the Crime Reduction Officers, will be on hand at the event to provide specialist advice.

Trisha Staerck, Crime Reduction Officer for Chelmsford and Maldon districts, said: "The event will raise awareness in respect to farm security and aims to reduce opportunities for criminals. Farm property is typically spread over many acres, and the event will give an excellent opportunity to inform the farming community about security devices that are available to protect their properties and equipment.

"The advice will be about taking proactive security measures and avoid becoming a victim of crime. There will be an opportunity to find out about property marking and to sign up to Essex Police Farm Watch Scheme."

