RUCKINGE MONTHY NEWS APRIL 2025.

This month I wanted to focus on animal crime and also horse safety around our roads.

As someone who lived much of my life in South London and North Kent towns, I have learned a great deal working with and importantly listen to rural folk especially councillors on the Ruckinge Council.
In truth sometimes I am appalled how drivers rocket around the lanes in country areas and also some of the animal crimes that go on. So I wanted to put something out about these matters.

Animal crime

Wildlife and animal crime can be a complex area to understand.

To find out what wildlife crime is, go to **our wildlife crime page**.

Crimes involving animals that aren't wildlife crimes, include:

- livestock worrying
- livestock theft
- hunting
- animal cruelty
- dogs being out of control in public places
- banned dogs
- dog theft

Livestock worrying

Livestock worrying is a criminal offence and comes under the **Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953**.

'Worrying' is where a dog attacks or chases livestock causing injury or suffering.

This isn't just a threat to a farmer or land owner's livelihood, it's also a dangerous situation for the animals involved, and could lead to more risk if the animals get onto the road.

A farmer is allowed to kill the dog if it's worrying their livestock.

Always keep your dog under control around other animals and if you see a dog on the loose worrying animals, **report it online**.

Livestock theft

Grazing animals can be an easy target especially in remote rural locations.

- check on your animal(s) regularly
- report any suspicious vehicles
- improve security around the area where the animal(s) graze
- ear tags, horn brands, freeze marking, hoof branding, tattoos and microchips can all help identify your animal(s) if they're stolen
- in the case of cattle (cattle, bison or buffalo) you will need to report the loss or theft of an animal to the **British Cattle Movement Service** within seven days
- some areas have Farm Watch or Rural Watch schemes, which you could consider joining

Remember, a horse passport is a legal requirement. You can find out how to apply for a horse passport.

Report livestock theft online.

Hunting

Hunting includes the chasing, capturing or killing of animals and birds.

Not all hunting is a crime, but there are many different laws to protect the different species of animals and birds. These laws cover things like:

- where you can hunt
- when you can hunt
- if you can use dogs or not
- the types of weapons and traps that can be used

Many animals are also protected by law, meaning it's illegal to hunt them at any time unless you have special exemptions.

If you're planning to go hunting, it's important to know what is legal and not.

Find out more:

Illegal hunting
Types of illegal hunting

Animal cruelty

Animal cruelty is when someone doesn't care for or deliberately hurts an animal.

It can include anything from physical violence, to deliberate mental distress or neglect, for example not feeding or cleaning an animal.

If you see, or suspect, that a person may be treating an animal badly, whether this is physical violence, neglect or any other form of cruelty, you should report this to the RSPCA.

We work with the RSPCA to investigate cases of animal cruelty.

If your partner, ex-partner or a family member has harmed or threatened to harm your pet, this can be a form of domestic abuse. Find out more about animal cruelty and domestic abuse.





Protecting livestock – signage available

Owners are urged to keep dogs away from livestock, on a lead near farm animals and be aware of where their dogs are at all times while on countryside walks.

Property owners near fields where livestock are kept are also asked to ensure their gardens are secure, so pets can't escape.

The Rural Task Force has signage available for any livestock owners who have footpaths near their grazing fields. Contact the team for more information.



Protecting livestock – **know the law**

'Worrying' livestock is a crime under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953.

If you are on agricultural land and a dog you own or are in charge of **attacks** or **chases** livestock in a way that may cause **injury**, **suffering** or **loss**, you could be **prosecuted**, **fined** and **ordered to pay compensation**.

Under the Animals Act 1971, a person acting to **protect livestock** may be able to **kill** or **injure a dog**, without incurring any criminal or civil liability, if he or she believes it is worrying livestock.



Please keep your dog on a lead.

If you see a dog worrying livestock, please call the police on **999**.



Kent Police

Protecting and **serving** the people of Kent


LAMBING SEASON
PLEASE WALK YOUR DOG RESPONSIBLY
Keep to footpaths
Keep dogs on leads


Speak up to
stop rural crime.
Criminal gangs exploit our local wildlife,
environment and communities.
Your voice can
make a difference.
Speak up to our charity.
100% anonymous. Always.
crimestoppers-uk.org
Keeping rural communities safer together
CrimeStoppers.
Speak up. Stop Crime.
CrimeStoppers.
0800 555111
100% anonymous. Always.



What is Pass Wide and Slow?

Pass Wide And Slow is a Facebook group set up to encourage and educate drivers how to pass horses safely on the road.

PASS WIDE & SLOW
AWARENESS RIDE/DRIVES

10 MPH

In the wild a horse is a 'prey' animal, that is they are DINNER and have therefore developed a fright/flight response to anything that scares or startles them (known as spooking).

A horse's natural response to something that spooks them is to run, kick out or spin and look.

No matter how well they are trained, occasionally nature takes over. If it makes you jump, it will make a horse jump - that bird suddenly erupting from a tree could be a tiger!

A horse can spook sideways at up to 50mph.

A horse can beat many road legal vehicles at 0-30mph.

A horse's back legs can kick out a surprisingly long way.

SO...

Give 2 metres width where possible.

When passing (from front or behind) slow to 10mph. If you are approaching a horse head on at 30mph and that horse spooks, that is an impact speed of 80mph!

Cyclists - please call out if approaching from behind, a voice is less scary (especially if riding into the wind, when even the horse may not hear you).

A carriage should be classed as a LONG vehicle.

Please look at the rider. If they are asking you to stop or slow, they are doing it for a reason (they are NOT waving!).



MYTH BUSTERS

Drivers may say:

Horses shouldn't be on the road - why not?

Should ride in the fields - Fields are privately owned, and to get to any that allow us to ride in, or bridleways, WE HAVE TO USE THE ROADS.

You don't pay road tax - neither do you! Road tax was abolished in 1937. Vehicle emission tax also doesn't apply to bicycles, classic cars, vintage cars, and electric cars.

Are you insured? – There are probably more horses insured on the road than cars!

Only toffee-nosed, rich, entitled people own and/or ride horses riders come from all walks of life - nurses, lorry drivers, police officers, shop workers - to name but a few.

THESE ARE ALL OPINIONS! - which have been often expressed to horse riders!

PLEASE REMEMBER,

The riders are all someone's mum, dad, son, daughter, brother or sister.
The horse is a member of their family.

Don't leave a ghost behind.



10mph

Slow down to a maximum of 10mph.



Be patient

I won't sound my horn or rev my engine.



Pass wide

Pass the horse wide and slow (if safe to do so), at least a 2 metres if possible

Stay safe, secure, alert and vigilant. Let’s all work to keep our beautiful countryside a safe and enjoyable place for us all and especially respect the country code

Thank you
Peter
(Peter new Coumminty Neighbourhood Watch)