

# Advice on rural arson



Every year in the UK, 1,700 farm buildings and 66,000 acres of grassland are destroyed by fire. Half are started deliberately, either as an act of mindless vandalism or a fraudulent insurance claim.

A serious fire on a farm can affect the financial stability of even the most well run business and cause enormous damage to the environment.

**40% of businesses that suffer arson attacks never trade successfully again.**

Farms are particularly vulnerable to arson. Their isolated location, open boundaries and readily ignitable hay and straw make them an easy target. While arson attacks on farms and smallholdings may be difficult to eliminate, a number of simple precautions can substantially reduce the risk of attack. General advice on reducing the risk of falling victim to theft and vandalism follows the arson reduction advice.

## Tips to consider:

- Hay and straw should be removed from fields as soon as possible after harvesting
- Hay and straw should be stored:
  - separately from other buildings, particularly those housing fuels, agrochemicals and machinery
  - in stacks of a reasonable size, spaced at least 10 metres apart
  - separately from livestock housing
- Petrol, diesel and other fuels should be stored in secure areas and storage tank outlets should be padlocked.
- Fertilisers and pesticides should be kept under lock and key. The Health & Safety Executive can provide further advice on the storage and transportation of fertilisers, particularly ammonium nitrate.
- Rubbish should be disposed of safely and on a regular basis

## Assessing the risk

- A quick and simple survey will identify areas where an arsonist could strike. If there are certain areas you are unsure about, ask your local Safer Neighbourhood Team or insurance advisor for assistance.

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## Your survey may reveal the need to:

- Provide, repair or replace damaged fencing or gates
- Install intruder sensors and security lighting
- Maintain security of outbuildings
- Replace or re-site security and warning notices
- Maintain fire-fighting equipment in good order
- Dogs and geese can give effective early warning of intruders however, dogs should not be allowed to roam freely
- Prepare a fire routine and action plan and ensure that all farm workers know what to do in the event of a fire

## If a fire breaks out:

- Call Warwickshire Fire and Rescue without delay
- Only attempt to fight the fire if it is safe to do so
- Send someone to the farm entrance to direct the fire service
- Prepare to evacuate livestock should the fire spread
- Prepare to use farm machinery to assist Warwickshire Fire and Rescue

## Preventing fires in grassland and standing crops:

The danger of fire during hot weather is self-evident, but many fires occur in the spring and late summer due to carelessness.

## To help prevent these types of fire:

- Do not allow the lighting of open fires or barbecues
- Ensure cigarettes etc are extinguished carefully
- Only allow camping and picnicking in selected areas
- Provide litter bins for bottles and other rubbish - and empty them regularly
- Ensure parents supervise their children
- Regularly check and maintain open water supplies for fire-fighting
- Ensure 'Fire Danger' warning signs are in place

The ease of access to most farms makes total security impossible, but there is a lot you can do to reduce the risks and it doesn't all involve extra expense.