Operation RECALL: UK Police and charities join forces to launch operation to tackle livestock attacks.

Wednesday 27 March, 2024

This Easter, from the 27th March to 3rd April, police up and down the country are planning events for the Operation Recall week of action to raise awareness with the public and provide tips on how to keep family pets safe, as well as livestock. There will be proactive targeting of hot spot areas, with the use of police drones, a talk to school children and a flagship easter event at a country park in Cheshire.

Last year, Operation Recall was born. National animal welfare charities, including Naturewatch Foundation and the RSPCA, joined forces with police and the National Rural Crime Unit (NRCU) to launch the project to tackle the issue. Founded by Cheshire Police, Operation Recall has so far been used to create a hard-hitting video, which now forms part of the mandatory caution system. This means that if the offender avoids a court appearance for their actions, they must watch the educational video to understand the devastating consequences caused.

Utter devastation is often caused by loose dogs attacking sheep in the British countryside and only recently, an incident in Devon left 43 sheep dead and more injured after a brutal attack, with an investigation ongoing with the police.

The National Farmers' Union Mutual (NFU Mutual) Rural Crime Report 2023 showed a 50% increase in costs associated with dog attacks on livestock since 2019.This increase comes at a time when there has been huge growth in dog ownership since Covid-19 lockdowns began in early 2020.

PC Jim Clark of Cheshire Police said, "The Operation Recall week of action is hoping to highlight such issues with a view to protect livestock and dogs. We hope you enjoy the countryside with the knowledge that the police and our partners across the country will be in high footfall areas to educate and enforce if required.''

Figures suggest that, as a consequence of dog attacks on farm animals, at least one dog a week is shot.

Kate Salmon, Operation Recall lead for Naturewatch Foundation, said, "The consequences of attacks for all animals involved can be devastating. Some people go out for a walk with their dog, or unknowingly allow their dog to escape their property and return home without their family pet. With more awareness and self-responsibility, people can enjoy their pets, whilst keeping them and livestock safe. We're calling for everyone to protect their dog and protect livestock."

Naturewatch Foundation is running a public-focused pledge whereby the public are encouraged to pledge to a few simple prevention tips. Any responsible dog owner wishing to sign the Operation Recall pledge can do so here: https://action.naturewatch.org/take-lead-and-sign-pledge-animals

The RSPCA's advice is to keep dogs on leads around livestock, and Geoff Edmond, their national wildlife lead, said: "No one wants to see animals suffer and sadly accidents can happen, with even the most docile and obedient dogs distracted and excited by grazing animals. By listening to the advice and getting behind Operation Recall the public can end such unnecessary incidents. Some actions in life we can't avoid. This one we can."

To find out how your local police force is taking part, follow their Rural Crime Team social media pages to keep up to date.

PC Jim Clark said, "Operation Recall does not want to deter people from going out in the countryside or where livestock may be; it is about knowing how to respect those areas. Throughout the entire campaign, our key message and most important piece of advice is that keeping a dog on a lead is the best and safest way to ensure the safety of the dog and any other animals in the area."

For more information on Operation Recall, visit the information page at:

https://naturewatch.org/campaigns/operation-recall/

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