

REDUCING THE IMPACT OF RURAL CRIME IN NSW



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QUICK TAKE

- The NSW Police Force defines rural crime as “incidents of crime that impact on the function of the pastoral, agricultural and aquaculture industries”.
- To better service rural and remote NSW, the Rural Crime Prevention Team was established during late 2017 and members of the team are located at 27 non-metropolitan locations.
- Over 350 NSW police officers have undertaken internal rural crime workshops since 2017, to increase their understanding of rural crime and its impacts.
- The Rural Crime Prevention Team provides services to investigate and prevent rural crime, which are promoted to rural and regional communities through social media, community engagement and educational tools and resources.

PHOTO: Geographical location alone does not define rural crime. In addition to theft of livestock, rural crime may include rural trespass, illegal hunting, industry-related fraud, rural-related equipment theft and chemical theft. Essentially, it is any crime that affects pastoral, agricultural and aquaculture industries. Credit: NSW Police Force

Since 2002, New South Wales Police has devoted resources to focus on and investigate rural crime. From that time there has been a steady progression towards understanding crime in the rural sector and building the capacity of the NSW Police to prevent, disrupt and respond to rural crime.

THIS direction has and continues to see an increase of rural crime reporting. The increase in reporting does not necessarily equate to an increase in instances of rural crime but it certainly is a move towards being able to accurately quantify and respond to the problem.

On the back of a Rural Crime Review (The Bradshaw Report) commissioned by the NSW State Government in 2016, a number of recommendations were made aimed at better servicing rural and remote NSW. In 2017, Commissioner Michael Fuller APM, made a commitment to the people of regional NSW to address incidents of rural crime in the state of NSW. During December 2017, Deputy Commissioner Gary Worboys, Regional NSW Field Operations, announced the creation of the Rural Crime Prevention Team.

The key points of this new team were:

- creation of two 'coordination' levels for the Rural Crime Investigators
- increased resources targeting rural crime
- a career path for Rural Crime Investigators
- ensuring the NSW Police Force continues to advance in both an operational and policy capacity to target rural crime.

The Rural Crime Prevention Team has 46 dedicated and specialised officers, whereas previously, there were only 37 Rural Crime Investigators. The Rural Crime Prevention Team covers three zones: Northern, Central and Southern. Each zone has a Detective Sergeant coordinating the Rural Crime Investigators and Rural Crime Intelligence Analyst.

The current structure of the Rural Crime Prevention Team which has been implemented by the NSW Police Force consists of:

- 1 x Detective Inspector – State Rural Crime Coordinator based at Dubbo/Mudgee
- 3 x Detective Sergeants – Rural Crime Zone Coordinators, based at Parkes, Moree and Cootamundra
- 38 x Detective Senior Constables – Rural Crime Investigators
- 3 x Rural Crime Intelligence Analysts (civilian), based at Parkes, Moree and Cootamundra
- 1 x new Rural Crime Policy and Programs Officer (civilian) based at Dubbo

Detective Senior Constable Chris Wells is the Rural Crime Investigator for the Murrumbidgee Policing District, based at the Griffith Police Station.

Detective Sergeant Damian Nott is the Southern Zone Coordinator– Rural Crime Prevention Team, based at the Cootamundra Police Station.

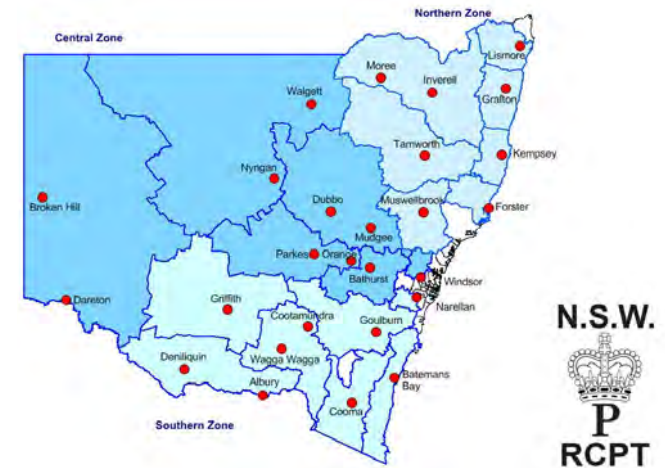


Figure 1. Zones and districts of operation of the Rural Crime Prevention Team

Defining rural crime

The NSW Police Force defines rural crime as “incidents of crime that impact on the function of the pastoral, agricultural and aquaculture industries”.

Defining rural crime is imperative to ensure Rural Crime Prevention Team resources are consistently deployed to best effect. Geographical location alone does not define what is rural crime or what is not. Rural crime is not just limited to the theft of livestock. Crimes investigated by the Rural Crime Prevention Team include rural trespass and illegal hunting, industry-related fraud, rural related equipment theft, chemical theft and many more.

Raising understanding and awareness

Following are key aspects of what the Rural Crime Prevention Team has achieved since it was created and the future direction of the team for targeting rural crime.

Educating frontline police

Over 350 officers have undertaken an internal Rural Crime Workshop across the NSW since 2017. These workshops are designed to provide frontline police with an understanding of what rural crime is, what a rural crime investigator does, the impact of rural crime (direct from a rural crime victim), how to record rural incidents correctly, and participants visit a local rural industry relevant to the area the workshop is being held. Although this workshop was designed for the frontline police, we certainly do not limit it to only those officers. Police prosecutors and intelligence officers have also enrolled in this workshop.

Increased social media presence

The primary social media platform for the Rural Crime Prevention Team is the NSW Police Force Rural Crime ‘Eyewatch’ Facebook page — www.facebook.com/RuralCrimeNSWPF/

Since the creation of the Rural Crime Prevention Team, there has been a 115% increase in the number of followers on the Rural Crime Facebook page.

The social media presence has increased significantly with over 2.2 million people viewing posts. This platform is used to seek assistance in solving many crimes, such as cattle theft, malicious damage, illegal hunting, firearm offences and break and enters on farms.

Enhanced community engagement

Members of the Rural Crime Prevention Team attended over 15 agricultural shows, such as Gunnedah AgQuip, Mudgee Field Days and Casino Beef Week, on an annual basis. They also presented at various NSW Farmers’ Association and Local Land Services meetings and workshops.

During September and October 2018, the NSW Farmers’ Association and members of the Rural Crime Prevention Team held 26 “Tackling Rural Crime – Security Assessment Workshops” for farmers across NSW.



The Rural Crime Prevention Team targets a range of activities, such as illegal hunting, rural trespass, stock theft and firearm theft.

Topics discussed at these workshops were:

- steps farmers can take to detect and deter rural crime
- new crime fighting technologies
- how to report rural crime to police
- what to do if you are a victim of rural crime
- and importantly, "target hardening".

We all know prevention is better than cure. "Target Hardening" is a term used by police that simply relates to strategies and action that can be taken to reduce the risk of becoming a victim. There are a multitude of target hardening options available to those in the rural industry, from using a lock and chain right through to high tech surveillance systems. Police encourage a visit to the below mentioned website to access a suite of reference material to assist in assessing the security of your property or enterprise and treatment options to reduce risk of a crime occurring.

Tools and resources for rural industries

The NSW Police Force website has a dedicated section addressing [rural crime](#)

This webpage provides members of rural industries with tools and resources to help them prevent and raise awareness of rural crime.

These resources include:

- security brochures
- fuel storage template
- stock theft template
- locations of all rural crime investigators
- farm security assessment
- firearm safe storage
- rural crime prevention information
- straying stock on public roads information
- private property template.

Ongoing rural crime operations

Over 60 separate operations have been conducted and/or coordinated by members of the Rural Crime Prevention Team targeting a range of activities, for example, illegal hunting, rural trespass, stock theft and firearm theft.

Separate to offenders being placed before the Courts, results from these operations include:

- confiscation of offender's vehicles, hunting equipment and firearms
- recovery of stolen firearms
- multiple musters and recovery of livestock.

The Rural Crime Prevention Team also coordinates joint operations between government agencies. This holistic approach allows for multiple issues and jurisdictions to be addressed simultaneously. Examples of these government agencies include NSW Fisheries, Game Licensing Unit, National Parks and Wildlife and Local Land Services.

Reporting rural crime

We encourage rural land owners to report all rural crime to their local police. All NSW police officers can take a report of rural crime—not just members of the Rural Crime Prevention Team.

Victims of rural crime can report crime by any of the following methods:

- Call their local Police Station
- Talk to their local Rural Crime Investigator
- Call the Police Assistance Line (PAL) – 131 444
- Report online using the NSW Police Force Community Portal - https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/community_portal/online_reports

Or, if you have information regarding this type of crime or rural crime offenders, you can call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

Contact the Rural Crime Prevention Team

Detective Senior Constable Chris Wells
Rural Crime Investigator–Murrumbidgee Policing District
Griffith Police Station
Telephone: 02 6969 4299

Detective Sergeant Damian Nott
Southern Zone Coordinator– Rural Crime Prevention Team
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