



## INTRODUCTION

Every year in the UK 1700 farm buildings and 66000 areas of grassland are destroyed by fire. Fifty per cent of these fires 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. Forty per cent of businesses that suffer arson attacks never trade successfully again.**

Farms are particularly vulnerable to arson, their isolated location, open boundaries, readily ignitable hay and straw make them an easy target. Whilst arson attacks on farms and small holdings may be difficult to eliminate, a number of **simple precautions can substantially reduce the risk** of attack. A lighted cigarette butt thrown from a passing vehicle can mean the loss of whole fields of standing crops, whilst glass bottles left lying around in grass or woodlands can cause fires of huge proportions during the warm dry weather as a result of the sun's rays being concentrated and focused by the glass. Hay and straw should be removed from fields as soon as possible after harvesting.

### TO HELP REDUCE THE RISK HAY AND STRAW SHOULD BE STORED:

- Separate from other buildings, particularly those housing fuels, agrochemicals and machinery.
- In stacks of reasonable size, spaced at least 10 metres apart.
- Separate from livestock housing.
- Petrol, diesel and other fuels should be stored in secure areas; storage tank outlets should be padlocked.
- Fertilisers and pesticides should be kept under lock and key.
- Refuse should be disposed of safely and on a regular basis.

### ASSESSING THE RISK

A simple quick survey around the farm will identify areas where an arsonist could strike, ask the local crime prevention officer/your insurance adviser for their assistance.

### YOUR SURVEY MAY REVEAL THE NEED TO:

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

## **PREVENTING FIRES IN GRASSLAND AND STANDING CROPS**

- The danger of fire during hot weather is self-evident, however, many fires occur in the spring and late summer, usually due to carelessness.
- Don't allow the lighting of open fires or barbecues.
- Ensure cigarettes etc. are extinguished carefully.
- Only allow camping and picnicking in monitored areas.
- Provide litter receptacles for bottles and other rubbish. Empty them regularly.
- Ask parents to supervise their children.
- Regularly check and maintain open water supplies for firefighting.
- Ensure "Fire Danger" warning signs are in place.
- Remember- **report all incidents of fire and anyone acting suspiciously to your local police.**

### **IF FIRE BREAKS OUT...**

- Call the Fire and Rescue Service 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 and Rescue Service to the fire.
- Prepare to evacuate livestock should the fire spread.
- Prepare to use farm machinery to assist the Fire and Rescue Service.

Information reproduced courtesy of Cornwall County Fire Brigade