

Improving Farm & Nursery Security

Introduction

Rural crime is on the increase partly as a result of more effective security measures within urban, commercial and industrial areas. Remoteness and low population density in rural locations make farms and nurseries soft targets while the improved road network makes for easy escape routes.

Thieves are generally after goods or material that can quickly be turned into cash and increasingly they seek high value machinery for which there is a ready market. Farms are also subject to politically motivated intruders and others bent on vandalism and mischief.



General Considerations

Intrusion and theft can be combated by improved security measures: deterrents and defenses. Defenses make the crimes more difficult to carry out while deterrents act to discourage the intrusion in the first place. Sometimes the measures that disturb thieves in the course of a burglary can help in collecting evidence leading to

identification and prosecution. Security starts at the farm gate. If you have closed for the day and are not expecting visitors then it is a good idea to shut all gates but add some kind of bell or calling system to enable visitors to attract your attention.

Deterrents

Security Lighting

The essence of security lighting is that the farmer/observer should not be easily seen but that approaching strangers are. It is a key part of the overall security defenses and supervision. Recorded evidence of an intrusion can help the Police identify suspects and will help you in pursuing an insurance claim.

Objectives

- To make the farm appear secure and watched.
- To make all intruders clearly visible.
- To make the potential thief feel exposed and vulnerable.
- To enable cameras and observers to record details of visitors, vehicles etc.

- To improve the safety of farm staff when moving around the farm during the hours of darkness.

In general two kinds of lighting are used; the first is dawn-to-dusk illumination that lights relatively large areas for long periods but usually at fairly low levels of intensity. The second kind is instant high levels of light in selected locations for short periods where some activity has been detected and with a view to scaring off the intruder. A good security lighting system may be a combination of both types.

You may have an illuminated farm name board that can also serve to light up the entrance. Long drives need not be entirely lit, the most important part is the approach to the farm buildings where visitors can be seen. It is a good idea to make the approach to the farm free of obstructions so that visitors have to cross open space and can be spotted while still some distance way.

In the case of a simple rectangular building satisfactory lighting may be achieved by mounting floodlights or street lighting type lanterns around the perimeter taking care to ensure that recessed doorways are not left in deep shadow to provide concealment. If the building is small, one luminaire at each corner may be all that is necessary. For larger buildings, luminaires spaced up to 30m apart will be adequate providing that a single lamp failure does not create a significant dark area. With irregular buildings it may be possible to use a combination of luminaires mounted on the walls or on external poles to prevent deep shadows.

Farmyards can usually be lit satisfactorily by means of floodlights mounted high up on the farm buildings. Take care to avoid placing lamps in the sight line of drivers and machinery operators as the glare may cause accidents and nuisance. Similarly if security cameras are installed, lights should not

shine directly at them.

Lighting Controls

Security lighting is only effective if it is working properly and is switched on at the appropriate time; automatic controls do this best. Whichever type of control is used it should be secure against unauthorized interference.

A photoelectric (PE) cell responds to the amount of light it detects and will switch on when the light falls below a certain level and off when the level rises again. These values are normally 70lux for switch on and 100lux for switch off. Thus it gives 'dusk-to-dawn' operation. A time delay is usually incorporated to avoid switching by passing lights or dark clouds. PE cells are reliable and relatively cheap and if they fail it is usually in the 'switched on' condition so that the fault can be noticed. The PE can be fitted as a single central control to energise a complete lighting circuit or may be an integral component of an individual luminaire. PE cells can be used in conjunction with time controls if lighting is only required for a set period within the hours of darkness.

Time switches can be employed for security lighting purposes, but if used on their own they will need to be adjusted frequently to accommodate the changes in daylength. Time switches need to be checked regularly both for accuracy and in case of supply interruptions. Most modern timers have battery reserves that guard against supply interruptions.

Alarms

There are two types of burglar alarm: bell/siren only or monitored. The siren-only alarm sets off a bell or siren, which should be sufficiently loud for those living on site or nearby to hear but to which the Police are unlikely to respond. A monitored

alarm will automatically call out the police via an alarm-receiving centre. A basic monitored alarm costs a bit more to install and must be professionally maintained and monitored to qualify for a Police response. Some farmers and growers wire up their equipment to a circuit that will set off an alarm if broken. In rural areas, a monitored alarm may be of little use if the thief has gone before the Police can arrive.

Owners should check their physical defences before opting for electronic detectors. A bells-only alarm that passes the test of the National Approval Council for Security Systems, is usually adequate where the losses are likely to be less than £10,000.

Closed-circuit Television

Closed-circuit television (CCTV) technology is developing fast. The most sophisticated CCTV systems can now recognise images of known criminals and draw attention to their presence. In some systems microwave links can replace cabling which cuts installation costs, while digital hardware improves picture clarity. Modern CCTV cameras can be small, easy to install, low maintenance and reliable. Picture resolution has increased dramatically on new systems.

CCTV is at its best when it can be constantly monitored but farms and nurseries are not likely to have the staff resources to do so. Cameras do not have to record continuously; they can be connected to a PIR detector so they are turned on only when there is some activity to pick up. On remote sites, the camera can be linked to a telephone line, and the pictures transmitted to a recorder or personal computer. There is a wide range of equipment available to suit different budget levels. Technology is not the sole answer to preventing crime but being able to capture evidence is a great help particularly on remote sites where nobody is resident.

Defenses

The most effective means of protecting farm and nursery property are physical defenses. Ensure your valuables are locked, immobilised and kept within securely locked buildings. This is not always practical especially during busy working times. Opportunists may seize the chance to make off with items left unattended for just a few moments. Again if it is known that the farm has a particularly sought after piece of equipment then it may be the target of a determined organized raid.

It may not be necessary to upgrade the security of all farm buildings. For example all vehicles, large plant and tools could be housed in a single unit and this building be made extra secure. Products such as shutters, grilles steel doors and locks can be sourced through security services companies as listed in yellow pages or advised by your insurance company. A good locksmith will also advise on practical improvements.

Finally

Security can be significantly improved through attitude, appearances and house keeping in addition the above measures. Attractive items left in full view of the public, shed doors that are not shut or secured, work shops that are open to view, unattended vehicles with keys in the ignition all present an irresistible opportunity to thieves.