

Crime prevention advice for hare coursing



Hare coursing is a blood sport and is a completely banned and illegal activity, yet it unfortunately remains common. The Hunting Act 2004 made hare coursing illegal and anyone convicted of the offence can be fined up to £5,000 by a Magistrates' Court.

Hare coursing is the pursuit of hares using hounds. Participants spread in a line across a field and disturb the hare from its home. They then release their dogs to give chase. A bet is made on which dog will catch the hare first with large sums of money changing hands.

Once killed, the hare's body is discarded and the participants carry on until all the hares in the field have been caught and they will then move on to the next field.

Hare coursing tends to start after harvest when large tracts of land are left without standing crops. This is usually around the end of August or start of September. Coursing is more likely to take place at dawn or dusk but it can also take place in broad daylight.

The most obvious sign is a group of vehicles parked in a rural area perhaps by a gateway to farmland, on a grass verge, on a farm track or bridle path. There will usually be estate cars, four wheel drives or vans. They may contain evidence of dogs inside – such as muddy paw prints and dog hair.

Hare coursers often travel in convoy with transit vans at the front and rear containing minders and the cars in between containing the employers

Hare coursers are criminals and give no consideration to landowners' property and crops. They often have a sophisticated information network and knowledge and they invariably know about vulnerable properties in the area, short cuts, and escape routes.

Violent confrontations can occur when participants are approached by landowners or their employees and this means that rural communities can feel very intimidated by hare coursers in their area.

We are committed to protecting declining population of brown hares and prosecuting those involved in hare coursing. In order to do this we work in partnership with farmers, landowners and gamekeepers.

If you see an event taking place we would advise you not to approach the participants but contact the police immediately on 999 if you have information on such activity then ring 101.

