

## Avoiding Horse Theft

### Your horse

- Keep a detailed description, including up to date photos of your horse all year around. Take close ups of any unique markings and scars and photograph your horse from all angles.
- Permanently mark your horse such as freeze branding or microchipping. Ensure the registration details are kept up to date.
- Know your horse, have they suddenly become wary or defensive? Are they staying in the corner? Are they lethargic or thirsty or showing other signs of being drugged?
- Check for unexplained injuries such as rope burns around the neck or legs.
- Don't leave head collars on or hanging over gates.



### Passport

- Keep your passport safe, whilst it is not proof of ownership, a horse cannot be legally sold without one.
- Establish a "proof of ownership file" including any receipts, insurance details, registration papers etc which can be easily found should your horse be stolen.

### Location

- Avoid keeping horses in isolated yards. Theft is reduced if thieves have to pass a house to gain access.
- Lock your trailer's hitch. Thieves can hitch your trailer, load your horse and drive off.
- Lock away yard equipment, forks and shovels can be used as weapons and your wheelbarrow can be used to carry away your belongings.

### Secure boundaries

- Check fencing carefully for any changes. Lock gates and reverse the top hinge on the gate to make it impossible to lift off.
- Consider fitting alarms, motion sensors or CCTV and display signs that advertise that your property has been security marked.
- Keep tack rooms locked and stables secure.
- Don't keep trailers and lorries parked in the same place for long periods, move them regularly.
- Dogs may act as a deterrent but may also be subject to theft or harm.
- An "escaped" horse may be a sign of attempted theft, a difficult to load horse may be set free.

### **Be vigilant**

- Check horses at least twice daily but vary visit times, liaise with other horse owners to ensure horses are monitored regularly throughout the day.
- Be aware of your surroundings so you quickly notice if things are wrong or missing
- Note potential livery enquiries or any interest expressed in your premises. Challenge strangers but don't put yourself at risk.
- Foster good relations with your neighbours. Watch for unfamiliar lorries and trailers parked in gateways or laybys and keep details of registration numbers.
- Join your local Horsecatch Scheme or get together with other horse carers and start your own.

### **Social media**

- Avoid announcing when you will be away from your horse or yard at competitions etc.
- Don't share details of expensive tack or new transport online.
- Don't share details of routines or complain about activities at a yard, much information can be gleaned from casual conversation.

### **Selling your horse**

- Don't publish your address and avoid websites which map your location automatically
- Advertisements may be scanned for potential theft and quick bargains or urgently needing sold may attract unwanted attention.
- If your yard is isolated or very rural, arrange for viewings at your local equestrian centre or livery yard.
- Avoid unaccompanied viewings where your attention may be diverted whilst potential "buyers" check out the stables or other horses.

### **Avoid buying a stolen horse**

- Generally stolen horses will not be sold through a sales ring but may be sold outside the ring perhaps from an unmarked lorry.
- If the horse is freeze marked, check the registration to ensure it hasn't been stolen.
- Horses are often sold for only a fraction of their value, if it is too good to be true, it probably isn't!
- Ensure the passport description matches the horse being sold.

### **If you have been a victim**

- Write down the details of the incident immediately, your memory will fade and important details may be missed when you report to the police.
- Prepare details of your horse to circulate.
- Contact the freeze branding or microchip registration companies.
- Contact your insurance company.
- Share the details on social media.
- Other helpful organisations include your local Horsecatch, horse sales, ferry ports, slaughter houses, charities and welfare organisations.