



## Would you know what to do if you saw Hare Coursers?

Gangs of men with lurcher dogs and 4x4 vehicles appear on the fields around our village after harvest, when the land is easy to move across. In the daytime you

may see these coursers walking the fields, ready for a hare to bolt. Their cars will be close for a quick getaway or parked up near our homes and footpaths. When a hare makes a move to escape they release a lurcher to pursue it. Someone from the group will film the chase, and live-stream footage to gamblers who have bet money on the result. Which dog will kill the most hares? Prized dogs are bought and sold on the dark web for up to £20,000.

Illegal but common in our area, hare coursing is punishable by imprisonment and fines of up to £5,000. The crime is hard to prevent because of the type of people who do it; often arriving in convoy with 'minders' to the front and rear. In cars with false number plates, uninsured and untaxed. Individuals have tried to confront coursers and been abused; farmers received death threats and have seen their barns and cars burnt down.

These violent groups have known links to illegal gambling, firearms and drugs. Their crimes in our area involve poaching and trespassing, road traffic offences, damage to crops, and property. They prey where local farmers feel isolated and inflict huge suffering on hare and deer populations. It's best to avoid engaging with coursers.

**WHAT SHOULD YOU DO if you witness this kind of activity?**

PC Matt Harkness, from the Rural Engagement Team, advises ***"If you see coursing in progress, dogs chasing hares, or people breaking into land to course, then please call 999 immediately"***. Give the exact location, with descriptions and numbers of vehicles, people and dogs. It is also useful to mention you are aware of police **Operation Galileo**.

**The most helpful location code comes from smart phone app What3Words. Download the app in advance and use it to generate the unique code for your precise location.** Pinpointing a remote field is a struggle without that vital detail! If the report is **second hand, or suspected, or a few hours old then, please still report online at [www.essex.police.uk](http://www.essex.police.uk) or by calling 101 or anonymously to CrimeStoppers on 0800 555 111.**

Small pieces of information build an intelligence picture of what's happening, who is involved and where the police are needed most. Left unreported then Essex Police can't get a clear idea of crime levels around our village or police it effectively.

PC Harkness said ***"We're working closely with the local rural and farming communities as well as partner agencies to combat this issue. The information we receive really has helped the team. I ask you to please continue to assist us and combat this illegal activity."***