



FarmAlert

The Ultimate Guide to Rural Security in New Zealand

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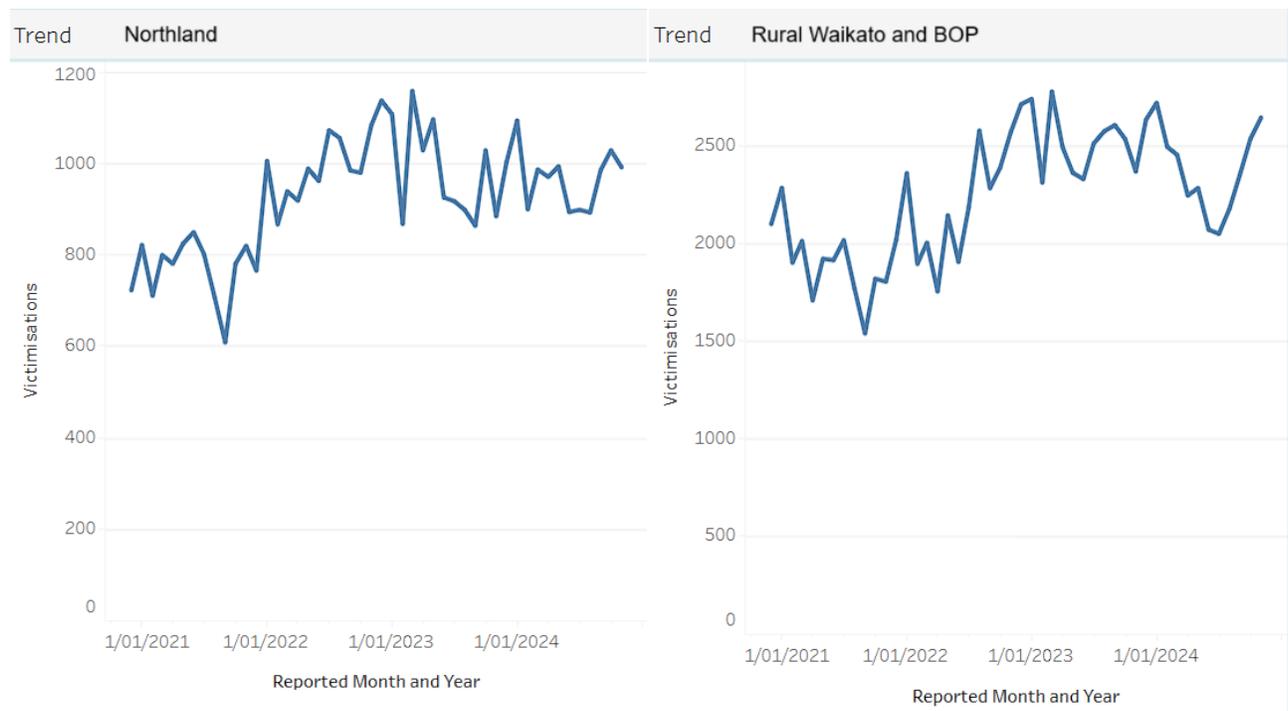
The Rising Tide of Rural Crime

There is a growing perception that rural crime is on the rise in New Zealand. But what do the facts tell us?

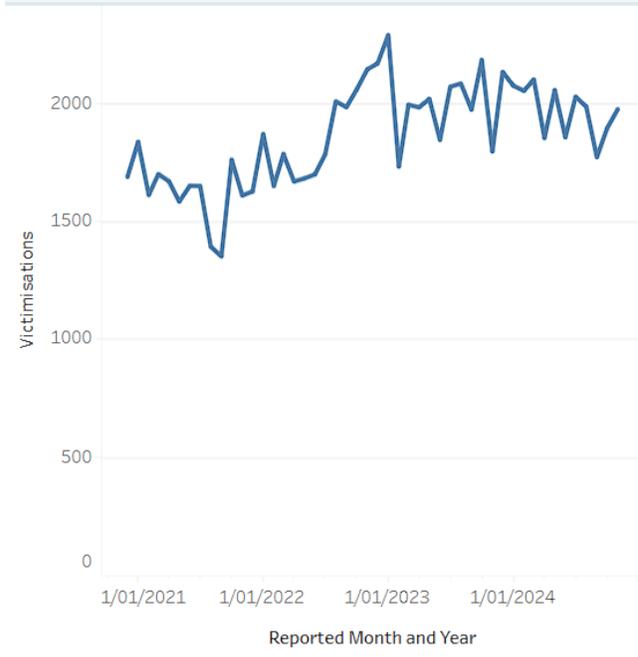
Federated Farmers conducts a rural crime survey every few years, the latest being in 2023. Among the more than 1,000 farmers who responded, 67% reported experiencing or suspecting a crime, particularly in cases where incidents like livestock theft or killing are difficult to prove.

This marks a 14.7% increase from the 2021 survey and a staggering 26% rise since the first survey in 2016.

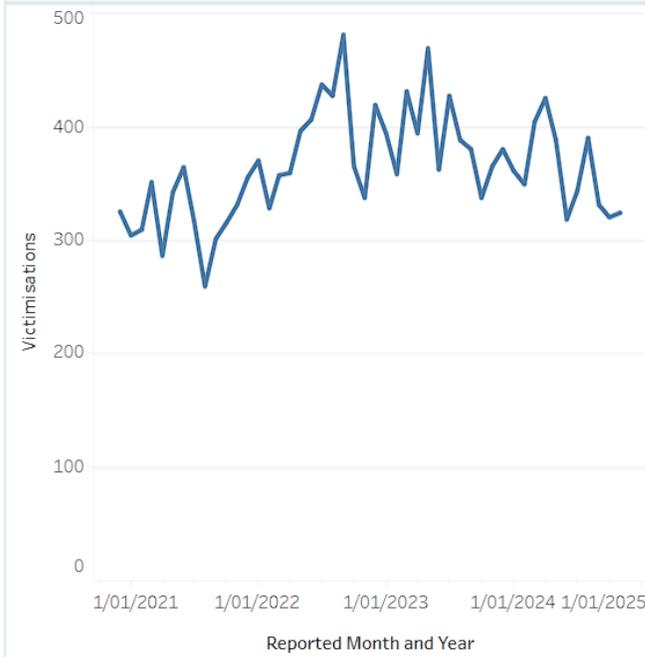
Police data on reported crimes is another valuable source of insight. The following charts illustrate the trends in reported victimisations across the regions. Note: these are reported crimes only.



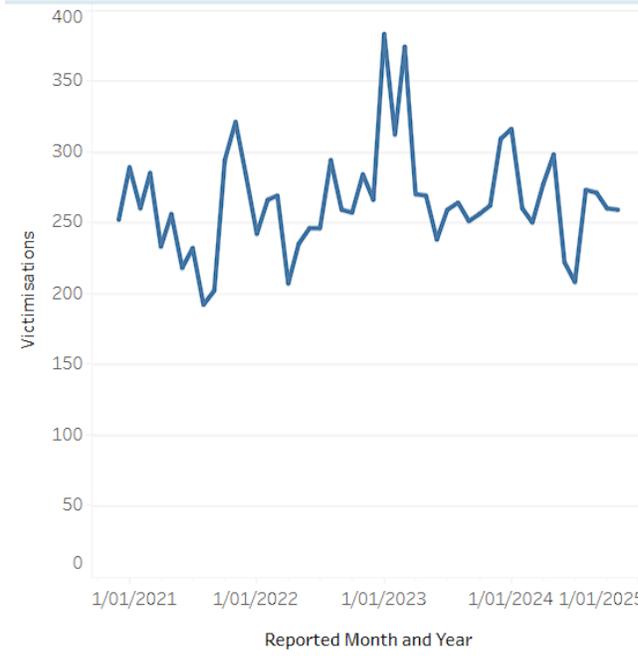
Trend Rural Central North Island, Taranaki and Hawkes Bay



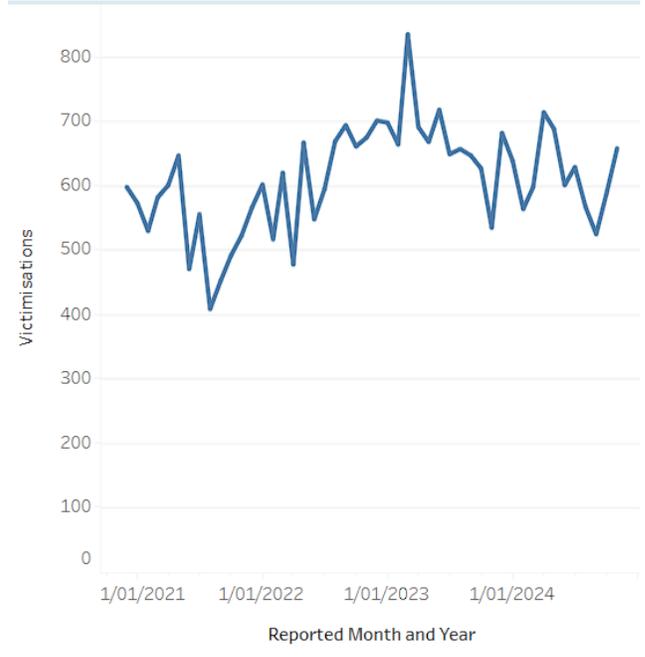
Trend Rural Wellington, Kapiti and Wairarapa

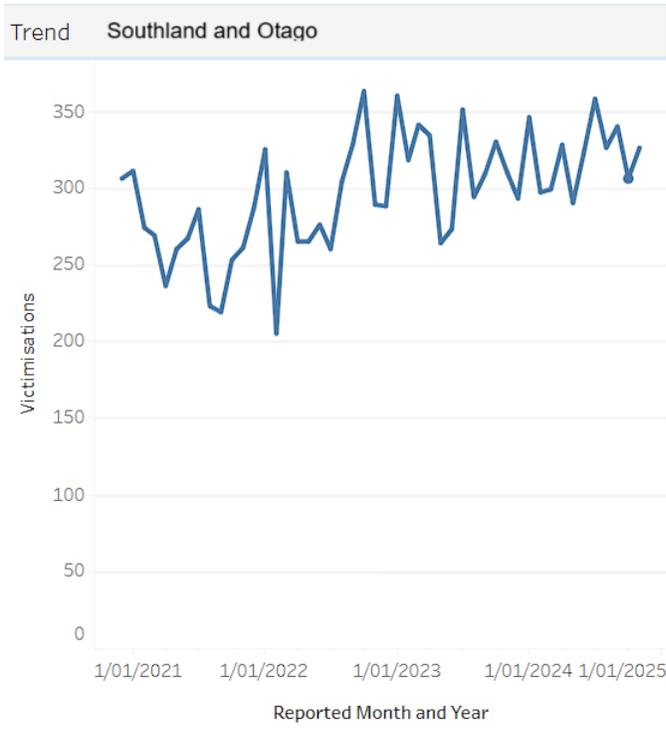


Trend Rural Tasman and Marlborough



Trend Rural Canterbury and Westcoast





Why Is Rural Crime Increasing?

Several factors contribute to the apparent rise in rural crime:

- **Socio-Economic Shifts:**

Economic pressures, including rising urban living costs, have prompted some individuals to move to rural areas. Unfortunately, property-related crimes have surged by 20% despite increased investment in social wellbeing and the adoption of security measures.

- **Unique Vulnerabilities of Rural Properties:**

“Thieves target weakness and wealth.” Unlike urban residential or commercial properties, which are typically easier to secure, rural properties are often expansive, wide open, and harder to safeguard. Valuable assets are frequently left in plain view, making them easier for opportunistic thieves to steal undetected.

- **Police Resources and Community Confidence:**

While the Police do an admirable job, rising crime rates naturally increase workloads, necessitating the reprioritisation of resources towards serious and solvable cases. This, in turn, can erode community confidence in reporting incidents, which emboldens offenders, especially those targeting property.

Is It Out Of Control?

- **Some Perspective:**

Despite these challenges, it's essential to maintain perspective. New Zealand remains one of the safest countries in the world, ranked 4th globally.

While increased media coverage and social media commentary have heightened awareness, this doesn't necessarily mean crime is out of control. It's also worth noting that crime statistics are overwhelmingly skewed toward property-related offences rather than violent crimes.

- **No, but the trend is concerning:**

Comparative to other countries, our crime levels are low, BUT there is an upward trend and we certainly need to take action. This guide is designed to help you and your community gain knowledge and tools to help keep crime from escalating.

What Can We Do?

The most impactful action we can take is to work together as a community!

Here's how:

- **Report Crimes:**

Reporting crimes is CRUCIAL for both the Police and our communities. If incidents go unreported, the Police cannot act. Timely and accurate information can lead to prosecutions and deter future offenders, especially if the information helps to solve the case.

- **Invest in Preventative Security:**

Effective security measures not only protect individual properties but also enhance the safety of the wider community. Preventative security is your best option, not just recording what has happened.

- **Collaborate:**

Private enterprises and Police are developing intelligent tools to curb crime, but community collaboration remains one of the most powerful deterrents.

Summary

New Zealand is safe, but we must remain vigilant and take action against the upward trend.

We must and can work individually and together as a community if we want to harden our areas against crime.

Read on for more insights into rural security issues, effective security strategies and planning, technology selection and more!

Rural Property Vulnerabilities

Knowing your property's weak points is the first step to stopping rural crime before it happens.

Physical Vulnerabilities

1. **Open Layouts:** Expansive, open properties are more difficult to monitor and secure.
2. **Multiple Entry Points:** Numerous gates, driveways, and access roads increase exposure.
3. **Poor Perimeter Security:** Inadequate fencing, gates, or hedging allows easy access.
4. **Unmarked Boundaries:** Lack of clear property lines can lead to unauthorized access.
5. **Unsecured Buildings:** Sheds, barns, or workshops may have weak locks or no locks at all. Many sheds have open bays with highly valuable assets.
6. **Unprotected Storage Areas:** Fuel tanks, equipment, and chemicals stored in open or poorly secured areas.
7. **Lack of Physical Barriers:** Absence of deterrents like high fences, gates and doors.
8. **Remote Location:** Isolation from neighbors or main roads reduces natural surveillance.
9. **Unsecured Waterways:** Rivers, creeks, or irrigation systems that provide hidden access points. Many rural properties border public land providing easy access.
10. **Overgrown Vegetation:** Bushes or trees that obscure sightlines and create hiding spots.

Technological Vulnerabilities

11. **Limited Connectivity:** Poor internet or mobile signal affecting alarms and cameras.
12. **Unmonitored Cameras:** Security cameras without real-time monitoring or adequate recording capabilities.
13. **Outdated Systems:** Older security equipment vulnerable to tampering or failure.
14. **Inadequate Lighting:** Insufficient outdoor lighting, especially around key areas.
15. **Non-integrated Systems:** Standalone devices that don't work together as part of a cohesive security network.
16. **Weak Alarm Systems:** Alarms with limited range or insufficient capability to alert property owners and the thief.
17. **Lack of Cybersecurity:** Vulnerable Wi-Fi networks or smart devices susceptible to hacking.

Human Vulnerabilities

18. **Irregular Monitoring:** Infrequent checks of property, equipment, and livestock.
19. **Unauthorised Visitors:** Contractors, delivery drivers, or unfamiliar workers gaining access without proper vetting.
20. **Complacency:** Over-reliance on the perceived safety of rural areas.

21. **Lack of Training:** Owners or staff unaware of security protocols or emergency procedures.
22. **Unreported Incidents:** Failing to report suspicious activity or minor thefts.
23. **Unsecured Keys:** Keys left in vehicles, machinery, or easily accessible locations.
24. **Visible Patterns:** Predictable routines that make it easy for thieves to plan around.

Asset-Specific Vulnerabilities

25. **Exposed Livestock:** Animals grazing far from monitored areas or in poorly secured paddocks.
26. **Valuable Machinery:** Tractors, quad bikes, and other high-value equipment left unsecured and in view.
27. **Unbranded Tools:** Equipment and tools without identifiable markings, making theft harder to trace.
28. **Fuel Theft:** Tanks or drums without locks or located in isolated areas with no security.
29. **Chemical Storage:** Hazardous materials stored in unsecured or poorly locked areas.
30. **Loose Scrap Metal:** Unsecured materials, especially copper that attracts opportunistic thieves.

Community Vulnerabilities

31. **Lack of Communication:** Poor coordination with neighbors or local watch groups.
32. **No Early Warning System:** Absence of shared alerts about suspicious activity in the area.
33. **Infrequent Patrols:** Minimal law enforcement presence or lack of private security patrols.
34. **Abandoned Buildings:** Neglected structures that attract thieves and vandals.
35. **Uninvolved Neighbors:** A community that doesn't actively participate in security efforts.
36. **Local Crime Rates:** Is there an active criminal presence in your location, or lack of activities for teenagers.

Environmental Vulnerabilities

37. **Seasonal Risks:** Increased vulnerability during calving, lambing, or harvest seasons when properties are busier and harder to monitor.
38. **Extreme Weather:** Heavy rain, snow, or storms that may disable security systems or obscure evidence.
39. **Fire Risks:** Unsecured flammable materials or poorly managed vegetation that increases fire threats, whether accidental or deliberate.
40. **Shelter Belts:** They are a valuable asset to a farm, but not from a security perspective. While it may seem logical to hide valuables behind a shelter belt, it also allows a thief to remain undetected and beyond the view of a camera.
41. **Public Access:** Properties that border areas of public access such as rivers, parks and reserves are a favourite target of thieves. We would avoid purchasing such property

unless it holds significant appeal. If you do own such property, better physical barriers and perimeter alarm systems can assist your security.

Psychological Vulnerabilities

- 42. **False Sense of Security:** Belief that rural isolation inherently deters crime, it actually attracts it as they are far easier to “rip off”.
- 43. **Underestimating Crime:** Dismissing minor thefts as unavoidable rather than preventable.
- 44. **Fear of Retaliation:** Hesitance to confront or report criminals due to fear of escalation.

Systemic Vulnerabilities

- 45. **Slow Emergency Response:** Delays in police or fire services reaching remote locations.
- 46. **Infrequent Updates:** Failing to keep security measures updated with emerging threats or technologies.
- 47. **Gaps in Insurance Coverage:** Insufficient or improperly configured policies that don't fully cover losses.
- 48. **Lack of Security Assessments:** Failing to evaluate property vulnerabilities regularly.

Summary

By addressing these vulnerabilities, as rural property owners you can significantly reduce your risk of becoming crime victims.

To learn how to mitigate these risks please read on.

Common Security Mistakes

Avoiding common mistakes can save you thousands, keep your property safer, and ensure your security investment actually works.

Physical Security Mistakes

1. Inadequate Fencing: Using weak, low, or poorly maintained fencing that's easy to breach.
2. No Gate Locks: Leaving gates unlocked or relying on flimsy locks that can be easily cut or bypassed.
3. Poor Lighting: Installing insufficient or no lighting around key areas such as entrances, sheds, or equipment storage.
4. Unsecured Storage: Failing to lock or properly secure barns, workshops, or storage sheds.
5. Leaving Valuables Visible: Keeping expensive machinery, tools, or other assets in plain sight.
6. No Perimeter Deterrents: Omitting deterrents like barbed wire, hedges, or signage to discourage trespassing.
7. Ignoring Entry Points: Overlooking secondary or less obvious access routes like waterways, forest tracks, or back roads.
8. Unbranded Property: Not marking tools, machinery, and other assets with identification (e.g., engraving or UV markers).

Technological Security Mistakes

9. Cheap or Inadequate Equipment: Low-quality cameras, trail cams, alarms, or sensors often fail to meet rural security needs. Spending hundreds on a trail camera that only shows blurry, delayed footage is pointless. Likewise, cheap driveway beams that just ring a bell inside offer little real protection.
10. Lack of Redundancy: Failing to have backup systems for power outages or internet disruptions.
11. Overlooking Night Vision: Using cameras without adequate night-vision capability, leaving the property vulnerable after dark. [Click here for detailed examples of many common cameras.](#)
12. Solar and battery powered: Purchasing cheap cameras that rely on solar and or battery due to lack of power and internet at site often has big tradeoffs such as night vision,

- image quality, battery life, hassle factor or other limitations making them not worth the investment. There are better solutions for supplying internet or solar to remote sites.
13. Insufficient Coverage: Installing too few cameras or sensors, leaving large blind spots.
 14. Unmonitored Systems: Relying on systems that don't notify owners or security services in real time.
 15. Poor Connectivity: Choosing technology that doesn't work effectively in areas with weak mobile or internet signals.
 16. Choosing Wi-Fi as a means of Device Connection: Wi-Fi is less than ideal, meaning the camera or device will be rendered useless if the signal fails.
 17. No Integration: Using standalone devices instead of integrating them into a unified, easy-to-manage system.
 18. Ignoring Cybersecurity: Using cheap devices off the internet, that are easy for hackers to break into your network, or weak passwords or failing to secure smart systems against hacking. The results can be devastating for the business owner or individual.
 19. Cameras as the sole solution: Cameras are valuable for recording and verifying events but are not always effective at preventing crime. Covering every angle of a rural property is costly, and offenders are often unrecognisable, hidden by hoodies, stolen vehicles, or simply unaware they're being filmed.

Human Factor Mistakes

20. Neglecting Routine Checks: Failing to regularly inspect and maintain security equipment.
21. Unsecured Keys: Leaving keys in vehicles, machines, or other obvious locations.
22. Predictable Schedules: Sticking to patterns that thieves can observe and exploit.
23. Not Training Staff: Employees or family members unaware of security protocols or how to operate equipment.
24. Overconfidence in Technology: Believing technology alone will stop theft without physical barriers or human oversight.
25. Poor Incident Reporting: Neglecting to report minor thefts or suspicious activity to the Police or neighbors.
26. Forgetting normal behavior: Overlooking everyday movements can lead to constant false alarms. Even the best security setup must account for the rural postie, livestock, workers, contractors, delivery vehicles, and your own family's routines.

Financial and Strategic Mistakes

27. **Poor choice of supplier:** Retail DIY cameras often look cheap online or in-store, but many perform poorly, even from well-known brands. They usually come with little support and can cost as much, or more than commercial-grade options in the long run. Social media “experts” often recommend what they bought themselves, but may lack real security expertise. Electronics retailers are not rural security specialists and rarely understand the unique needs of your property.
28. **Using an Electrician for security:** Some electrical companies have a security division, but most focus on commercial work. While residential electricians can wire a camera, few know how to choose and configure the right system for rural security. To work as - or own a company doing - private security or investigation work operators need to apply to the Private Security Personnel Licensing Authority (PSPLA) for a licence or certificate first under law. A registered electrician can install or service security systems without a Certificate of Approval (CoA) as a Security Technician. However, if they **sell** a security system or **advise** you on what to buy for a property they don't own, they are legally acting as a *Security Consultant* and must hold both:
- a. A CoA as a Security Consultant, and
 - b. A Company Security Licence in the same category (ideally also licensed as a Security Technician).

Working without these is illegal, with substantial fines for both the individual and the company. Always ask for their official PSPLA ID. If they can't produce it, they likely lack the required licence and expertise.

29. **Using an IT professional for Security:** Similar to Electricians, IT professionals cannot by law either sell or install security equipment at premises not owned by themselves unless they hold the relevant security certificates of approval licensed by the PSPLA and can prove this to you. They are breaking the law which can lead to significant fines. IT Professionals are very good at networking and cybersecurity but should not be selling and installing cameras unless they have the training and certification.
30. **Underinvesting in Security:** Skimping on security measures to save costs, leading to ineffective protection.
31. **Overinvesting Without a Plan:** Buying expensive technology without a clear strategy or understanding how it fits the property's needs.
32. **One-Size-Fits-All Approach:** Using generic security setups that don't account for the unique layout or vulnerabilities of rural properties.
33. **Failure to Upgrade:** Continuing to use outdated systems, software or firmware or equipment instead of modern solutions.
34. **Ignoring Cost-Effectiveness:** Investing in expensive measures when simpler, cheaper solutions could be equally effective. Commercial grade security solutions are often not much more expensive, but sometimes significantly cheaper when it comes to cost of ownership and ongoing tech support.

Community and Collaboration Mistakes

35. **Lack of Coordination with Neighbors:** Failing to work with neighbors on shared security efforts like watch groups or alerts.
36. **No Incident Sharing:** Not communicating about suspicious activity or incidents with the local community.
37. **Relying Solely on Police:** Assuming law enforcement will provide sufficient protection despite known delays in response times for rural areas.

Psychological and Mindset Mistakes

38. **Complacency:** Believing that crime won't happen because it's a rural area.
39. **Ignoring Small Losses:** Treating minor thefts as inevitable instead of preventable.
40. **Lack of Awareness:** Not staying informed about crime trends or new security technologies.
41. **Fear of Retaliation:** Avoiding confrontation or reporting crimes due to fear of escalation.

Operational Mistakes

42. **Improper Alarm Placement:** Installing alarms in locations where they're easily disabled or ineffective.
43. **Delaying Repairs:** Ignoring broken fences, gates, security devices, leaving the property vulnerable.
44. **No Backup Power:** Failing to account for power outages that could disable security systems unless they have battery backup.
45. **Forgetting Maintenance:** Allowing security devices to degrade due to lack of upkeep or letting foliage or insect contamination grow to an extent it affects their performance.
46. **Failing to Test Security Systems Regularly:** Many rural property owners invest in cameras, alarms, or gate sensors, but never test them after installation. Over time, batteries die, sensors shift, cameras go offline, or settings get changed, sometimes without you realising it. The first time you discover a fault shouldn't be during a real incident. Schedule periodic tests (monthly or quarterly) to check all devices, update firmware, and make sure notifications are still working as intended.

Legal and Ethical Mistakes

47. **Non-Compliant Systems:** Installing surveillance or security measures that violate privacy laws or local regulations. A security professional will help you navigate these laws.
48. **Improper Use of Force:** Using illegal traps or excessive measures to deter intruders, leading to liability risks. Many rural folk have ended up in more trouble than the thief!

Insurance-Related Mistakes

49. **Underinsuring Property:** Failing to secure adequate coverage for equipment, livestock, or buildings.
50. **Ignoring Policy Discounts:** Missing out on insurance discounts by not implementing recommended security measures.

Comprehensive Rural Security Planning

A clear plan ensures every dollar you spend on security delivers real protection, not wasted effort.

Our Advice

- **Security planning:** It's a crucial step that many people overlook. This is where a professional, licensed security consultant can make all the difference, not only in assessing your property and recommending appropriate technology solutions but also in understanding risks and criminal behavior.
- **Educate yourself:** Prior to engaging a security professional, or even doing it yourself take this step. Nobody knows your property better than you do and this process doesn't take long.
- **Start in the right direction:** A well-thought-out plan provides direction and ensures your efforts align with your security goals. Your plan does not have to do everything at once. Instead, take a series of measured steps over time, aligned with your budget, until your main risks are effectively mitigated.

Tip: The key is starting with the right infrastructure (internet and network) to build an integrated solution that grows with your needs.

The Plan

In the previous chapter, we outlined common mistakes people make with security. Now, let's dive into creating your plan step by step.

1. Assess the Current Situation

- Walk the Property:** Conduct a thorough inspection of your property. Identify access points, blind spots, and high-risk areas.
- Put yourself in the shoes of a thief:** How would they enter the property, what can they see that they would take advantage of.
- Boundaries and points of access:** Pay close attention to your boundaries, are there gates, do you border public land such as a river, reserve or forest that may be at higher risk.
- Additional Properties:** Do you have additional properties such as a lease block? Do you want these integrated?
- Identify Assets:** Make a list of what you want to protect (livestock, equipment, fuel, buildings, etc.).
- Understand Past Incidents:** Consider any prior security breaches or local crime trends. Gather information from neighbors and local authorities. Go to the

following website to get an understanding of the crime rate in your area, right down to your local streets, or meshblock.

[Victimisation Time and Place | New Zealand Police](#)

2. Understand Your Weaknesses

- a. **Map Vulnerabilities:** Highlight areas prone to trespassing, theft, or vandalism. Pay attention to secluded spots, poorly lit areas, and unfenced boundaries. If you don't already have property maps, high resolution maps can be found on the government website <https://basemaps.linz.govt.nz/>
- b. **Evaluate Existing Security:** Review any current security measures and list them down. Are they up to the task or outdated? Can they be integrated? This may take a security professional to advise.

3. Define Your Risks

- a. **Profile Potential Threats:** Think about the types of risks your property faces, such as trespassing, livestock theft, or equipment vandalism.
- b. **Consider Seasonal Risks:** Some risks like fuel theft due to high prices, public holidays spike in crime, poaching, or illegal hunting may increase during certain times of the year.

4. Set Your Security Objectives

Before investing in equipment, define exactly what you want your security system to achieve. Consider your *overall goals*, *specific needs*, and *practical scenarios*.

Overall Goals

- Create a “Fort Knox” perimeter that no one enters or leaves without you knowing.
- Start small (e.g., driveway monitoring) and scale over time to protect sheds, then the house.
- Keep costs minimal but protect high-risk areas (e.g., a shed repeatedly targeted by thieves) with evidence for authorities.

Specific Needs

- Feel safe and secure at home, especially at night.
- Maintain a complete log of vehicle license plates entering or leaving the property.
- Receive alerts when someone arrives or enters specific areas like the yard or workshop.

- Enable remote monitoring while away, with the option to hand control to trusted neighbors or friends.
- Provide maximum protection for sheds or storage areas with high-value assets.

Practical Scenarios

- Avoid false alarms from regular visitors like couriers, milk tankers, or contractors.
- Automatically arm or disarm the system on a set schedule.
- Allow certain gates or areas to remain accessible while securing others.
- Maintain full security coverage during power or internet outages.

Map Your Infrastructure

On your map, draw the places where you have power and internet available. Don't include areas that are serviced by Wi-Fi. Just where your hardware sits.

Define Normal Movements

Think about all the normal movements on your property that are legitimate. People, vehicles and animals.

- Write down all of these known movements, including timing, and location so it can be designed into how and where a security system would work.

Setting Your Security Budget

Starting without a budget is like fencing your paddocks without measuring them first. You'll either run out of wire or have too much left over. A realistic budget helps you prioritise, plan for the long term, and ensures every dollar spent actually improves your security.

How to Create a Practical Security Budget

- **List Your Priorities:** Start with your security objectives above. Decide what's essential now (e.g., protecting a vulnerable shed) and what can be added later (e.g., driveway cameras, perimeter monitoring).
- **Map the Assets You're Protecting:** Be clear about what you are securing. Livestock, machinery, tools, buildings, fuel, or all of the above. Higher-value or higher-risk assets may justify more investment.
- **Consider All Cost Components:** Security is more than just buying cameras or alarms. Your budget should cover:
 - Hardware (cameras, alarms, sensors, lighting)
 - Infrastructure (power supply, solar options, internet/data connections)
 - Installation (labour costs, travel to rural locations)
 - Monitoring (professional services or neighbour/friend arrangements)

- Maintenance (repairs, battery replacement, firmware updates)
- Subscription fees (4G, cloud storage, SIM cards, alert or app services)
- **Build in Contingency:** Rural installs often uncover surprises: lack of power in a location, poor mobile reception, or extra mounting hardware or cabling. Add at least 10–20% for unforeseen expenses.
- **Stage Your Spend:** Break your plan into phases. For example:
 - *Phase 1:* Driveway monitoring and main shed security.
 - *Phase 2:* House perimeter lighting and alarm integration.
 - *Phase 3:* Perimeter sensors and outlying paddock monitoring.

The Value of Working with a Security Professional

When you have an approximate budget and a plan, a licensed security consultant can help you:

- **Provide Prices:** If you are unsure of costs.
- **Maximise Value:** Allocate funds to the measures that give the biggest improvement in security.
- **Avoid Costly Mistakes** – Prevent buying equipment that won't work well in rural conditions or integrate with your future plans.
- **Plan for Growth** – Choose infrastructure that supports expansion, so today's investment works with tomorrow's upgrades.
- **Spot Hidden Costs** – Professionals know about the “extras” that catch people out. EG trenching for cables, 4G signal boosters, or power supply upgrades.

You may have to pay for this service from some vendors if they are not installing.

Key Steps

1. **Engage a Security Professional:** Hire a licensed security consultant to provide expert advice on technology and solutions tailored to rural settings. Their expertise ensures efficient planning and reduces costly mistakes.
2. **Start with Infrastructure:** Install the foundational elements first (e.g., fencing, gates, hardware mounting posts, network and power supply for cameras and alarms).
3. **Prioritise High-Risk Areas:** Focus initial investments on protecting the most vulnerable spots.
4. **Budget for Installation:** If you are going to do it yourself or plan for the time it will take you.
5. **Select Reliable Technology:** Choose devices designed for outdoor, rural environments, such as Commercial-grade cameras with night vision and weather resistance. Smart alarms and sensors for gates and equipment. Battery devices for remote areas. Our technology guides below will help you through this.

6. **Once Installed:** Conduct real-world tests of your security measures. Check for blind spots, false alarms, and ease of use. Many electronic systems will have to be tuned for your environment, especially cameras.. Don't expect perfection right away but work with your installer to tune the system.
7. **Train and Inform:** Educate all family members, employees, or tenants on the system's use. Make sure everyone knows how to respond to alerts or incidents. Make a plan that puts safety first. Let your neighbours know, in case they need footage or have privacy concerns.
8. **Monitor and Maintain:** Regularly review the system's performance. Are batteries running low? Be proactive. Address new risks as they arise, and update your plan to include evolving technology or crime trends.

Effective Security Solutions

Choosing the right mix of security tools is the difference between simply recording a crime and actually stopping it. Here are your core options:

Physical Barriers

This includes fences, gates, doors and effective locks. Out of sight and hard to get is a great way to defend your valuables. If a thief is determined and they have an idea of the value of what they are targeting, it may not stop them as they usually have the means to break past such barriers, often in a very destructive way. But it certainly helps a lot.

Security Lighting and Locks

This will help at night when thieves can be the most active but it's usually a minor distraction and certainly won't help if you are not home, or during the day.

Cameras

Cameras are often the first thing people think of when it comes to security for good reason. They can act as a visible deterrent (especially with signage), provide valuable evidence, and let you see what's happening in real time. A good system can help identify vehicles, people, or events, and give you peace of mind when you're away.

However, cameras aren't a magic shield. Many intruders will wear hoodies, caps, or masks, and some will ignore or even tamper with them. Image quality, resolution, and night vision all play a big role. Without the right spec, you may capture a scene but not a usable ID.

Rural properties present extra challenges: large areas, multiple access points, and distances that require more cameras, better networking, and sometimes more power solutions. Even then, cameras are only as effective as your ability to respond to alerts. If you're asleep, out of coverage, or busy, you may just be recording the incident rather than stopping it.

False alerts are also common in rural environments, wind in trees, animals, or passing vehicles. Though quality cameras and careful setup can reduce these. Think of cameras like a farm dog: a good one will let you know something's wrong, it may also bark at something that's fine but it still needs the farmer to show up and deal with the problem.

Pros

- Visible deterrent when paired with signage
- Records evidence for police or insurance
- Allows real-time monitoring and playback
- Can integrate with alarms for verification

Cons

- Intruders may disguise or avoid them
- May not cover all access points without high cost
- Effectiveness relies on your ability to respond
- Potential for false alerts in rural environments

Alarm Systems

Once seen mainly as indoor building protection, modern alarm systems have evolved into powerful, property-wide security solutions. Fully wireless outdoor rated systems can now reach hundreds of metres even 2–3 km which makes them ideal for sprawling rural properties. Many run on long-life batteries that last several years, reducing maintenance and fuss.

The biggest advantage is versatility: a wide range of sensors can reliably monitor gates, fences, accessways, sheds, and other key areas, often before an intruder even gets inside. Some sensors include built-in photo capture for visual verification.

Their real power lies in deterrence. A siren paired with flashing lights will send most would-be thieves running within seconds, even if you're not home. When combined with CCTV cameras, you get the best of both worlds. Real-time alerts plus the ability to visually confirm the cause.

Think of an alarm system like a good heading dog: it reacts fast, covers a lot of ground, and drives the intruder exactly where you want them. Out the bloody gate!

Pros

- Wide coverage, even over large distances
- Long-life batteries minimise upkeep
- Variety of sensors for different areas and threats
- Strong deterrent effect with siren and strobe
- Works seamlessly with cameras for verification
- Can alert you before an actual break-in

Cons

- Requires careful setup by a professional
- Wireless range can be reduced by heavy terrain or buildings
- Still needs you (or a contact) to respond for full effectiveness

Cameras vs. Alarm Systems - Which Does What?

| Feature / Consideration | Cameras | Alarm Systems |
|--|---|--|
| Primary Role | Records and monitors activity | Detects and deters intruders in real time |
| Coverage | Best for fixed viewpoints; multiple units may be needed for large areas | Wide coverage with wireless sensors reaching 100's of metres to km+ |
| Deterrence | Moderate. Visible cameras and signage may deter some offenders | Strong – siren and strobe lights often stop intruders instantly |
| Evidence Gathering | High – can capture visual proof for police or insurance | Limited – some sensors have photo capture, but main role is detection |
| Response Time | Dependent on user seeing and reacting to alert | Immediate – triggers alarm as soon as a sensor is activated |
| Reliability in Rural Environments | Affected by distance, power, and connectivity | Long-life batteries; wireless range can be reduced by terrain/obstacles |
| False Alerts | Possible from wind, animals, and environmental factors | Possible from animals or authorised visitors; reduced with careful setup |
| Integration Potential | Can integrate with alarms for verification | Can integrate with cameras for visual confirmation |
| Ongoing Costs | May require cloud storage or data plans | Minimal – mainly battery replacement every few years |
| Best For | Identifying vehicles, people, or events; post-incident review | Stopping an intruder before damage or theft occurs |

The Dog

A good dog can be both a loyal family member and a strong deterrent. Properties with dogs that have guarding instincts are often less targeted. But unlike a security system, a dog comes with higher ongoing costs and responsibilities: feeding, exercise, training, vet bills, weekly lawn cleanup and behavior control.

Most importantly, security hardware doesn't sleep, wander off, or stay at one spot. It can be placed anywhere on your property and alert you to a problem instantly, **no matter where you are!** A dog can be part of your security picture, but it's no substitute for technology that works 24/7 without complaint and can sit in your pocket.

Rural Security Electronics: What You Need to Know Before You Buy

The right knowledge turns a confusing market into a clear choice, and keeps you from buying gear that lets you down.

The market for cameras and alarms is crowded with choices. There are retail gadgets to professional-grade systems. Each claiming to be the answer to your security needs. In this section, we'll break down what's available, explain the performance jargon, and give you the practical knowledge to choose equipment that's reliable, effective, and suited to the realities of rural life. We are going down into the weeds on this one, because it's important.

Cameras

What's on the Market?

Commercial-Grade Cameras

In New Zealand, commercial-grade options include brands like Uniview, Hikvision, Provision, Dahua, Vivotek, Bosch, Axis, and Unifi, plus other lesser-known but capable models. These are built for continuous, professional use, offering a wide range of features and configurations for different applications. Later in this guide, we'll break down the key specifications so you can match the right model to your needs.

Consumer-Grade DIY Cameras

Retail brands like Ring, Arlo, Eufy, Netatmo, and Swann are designed primarily for suburban homes. While affordable and easy to install, most don't perform as well in rural environments, especially when it comes to range, night vision, and durability.

Other Sources

Many no-name cameras from online marketplaces promise high specs for low prices. In our experience, these often mean poor support, tricky installation, unreliable software, and disappointing image quality. More "overpromise and underdeliver" than real security. Honestly, don't waste your money.

What We'd Choose in Consumer-Grade

If you want a simple self-install option, **Eufy** is one of the better picks. Its wireless models offer reasonable range, accurate detection, and decent software. Downsides for rural use include limited night vision (10–15 m) and the hassle of frequent battery charging which can leave you exposed if the camera is offline.

Special Mentions:

- **Netatmo:** Accurate detection and better night vision thanks to a mains-powered spotlight, but limited to about 20 m from your Wi-Fi router.
- **Swann Max Ranger:** Much heralded due to longer wireless range but lower resolution, poor night vision and only ~9 m detection distance, rarely enough for rural needs despite the hype. Good only for close range / small areas.
- **Arlo:** Popular but suffers from short battery life, false alerts, and limited range.

Bottomline: Can these options work? Yes but only in limited applications.

Why Commercial-Grade Beats Consumer-Grade in Rural Settings

1. **Reliability in Harsh Conditions:** Built with weatherproof housings, high IP ratings, and wider temperature tolerance.
2. **Better Night Performance:** Larger sensors, stronger IR illumination, and “starlight” low-light modes give clearer night images.
3. **Greater Range & Zoom:** Varifocal or motorised zoom lenses capture detail from 50 m+ without loss of resolution.
4. **Flexible Power & Connectivity:** Supports PoE cabling, long runs, 4G/solar setups, and farm networks; not reliant on strong home Wi-Fi.
5. **Advanced Detection & Integration:** AI for human/vehicle filtering, ANPR, and integration with alarms, gates, and management software.
6. **Local Control & Storage:** On-site NVR or SD card recording keeps cameras working even if the internet drops.
7. **Long-Term Scalability:** Expand from two cameras to twelve or more without being locked into short product cycles or subscriptions.

Bottom line: For rural properties, commercial-grade cameras offer the durability, range, and image quality that consumer models simply can’t match. They’re designed for continuous, mission-critical use in tough environments. You wouldn’t buy a Bichon Frise to herd your sheep would you?

Commercial-Grade Options & Compliance

Performance among value-tier commercial cameras (Hikvision, Dahua, Uniview) is similar when comparing like-for-like models, with Provision, Vivotek, and Unifi sitting in the mid-pro tier, and Axis and Bosch at the enterprise level.

For rural New Zealand, the value tier often delivers the best balance of cost and capability. One consideration is NDAA compliance which is a US law banning certain camera hardware for security reasons. While this doesn’t currently apply in New Zealand, it could in future. **Uniview** offers models that are 95% NDAA compliant, making them a safer bet for long-term use, while still matching or beating retail options on price and performance.

Understanding Core Camera Specs

Once you know what's on the market, the next step is to understand the performance jargon so you can choose a camera that actually works on your property and those rural conditions.

1. **Resolution:** Measured in megapixels (e.g. 2MP, 4MP, 8MP) or formats like 1080p/4K. Higher resolution captures more detail at distance. Useful for identifying faces or number plates but requires more bandwidth and storage.

Tips:

- If your network or 4G data plan can't handle 4K, you may be better off with 4MP high-quality lenses than with 8MP that lags or drops out.
- A 2MP camera can still give excellent detail at distance if you need to view a small area and it has a long motorised zoom.

2. **Frame Rate (FPS):** Frames per second determines video smoothness:
 - 25–30 FPS – Smooth video, captures fast-moving objects clearly.
 - 10–15 FPS – Saves storage and data but can miss detail in quick events.

Tip: A higher frame rate is great but needs to be compatible with our storage device capacity and internet speed for streaming video.

3. **Sensor Size:** A key factor for low-light performance and clarity:
 - 1/2.8" – Solid baseline for most rural security tasks.
 - 1/1.8" or larger – Excellent for night performance and long-range clarity.

4. **Lens Type & Field of View (FOV):**
 - Fixed Lens – One set view, simple, cost-effective.
 - Varifocal – Adjust zoom and focus during install.
 - Motorised Zoom – Adjust remotely to fine-tune coverage.

Tip: You will pay more but a camera with a motorised zoom.

5. Lens & Sensor Guide Cheat Sheet : This table will show you what's possible with different lenses.

| Sensor Size | Lens (mm) | Approx. Horizontal FOV | Best Use Case in Rural Settings |
|---------------|-----------|------------------------|--|
| 1/2.8" | 2.8 mm | ~105° | Wide yard view, shed interiors, stock yards |
| | 4 mm | ~84° | General perimeter, house frontage |
| | 6 mm | ~55° | Driveway entry, gate 15–25 m away |
| | 12 mm | ~25° | Distant gate, lane, or paddock focus |
| 1/1.8" | 2.8 mm | ~120° | Extra-wide coverage with better low-light detail |
| | 4 mm | ~94° | General coverage, wider driveways |
| | 6 mm | ~65° | Road entrance up to ~30 m |
| | 12 mm | ~30° | ANPR/LPR at 25–40 m |
| 1" | 4 mm | ~110° | Premium wide view with excellent detail |
| | 6 mm | ~80° | Large gate or yard where clarity is key |
| | 12 mm | ~40° | Long-range ID/plate capture in low light |

6. **DORI Ratings:** A standard showing the distance at which a camera can:
- Detect movement
 - Observe general characteristics
 - Recognise a known person
 - Identify a stranger beyond doubt

This helps match resolution and lens choice to the distances you need to cover.

7. **Night & Low-Light Capability:** This is one of the biggest mistakes. Rural security often means working in near total darkness and a requirement to see far greater distances at night than what many cameras offer.
- IR Night Vision – Black-and-white detail, ideal beyond 30 m.
 - Starlight/Low-Light Sensors – Maintain colour in very low light.
 - White Light LEDs – Colour vision up to ~30 m, but can affect image sharpness and may reveal camera locations.

Tip: Be careful about IR reflection at the installation site. The camera can look fogged up at night if IR can bounce off a reflective or white surface back into the lens.

Bottomline: Think about how far you need to CLEARLY see at night at the location and check the camera spec to match that. There are cameras that can see 100m or more at night if you can provide enough DC power or POE.

8. **Smart Detection Features:** Modern cameras can go beyond basic motion detection.
- Human/Vehicle Filtering (AI) – Reduces false alerts from animals, weather, or foliage.
 - ANPR/LPR – Reads licence plates day or night using tuned IR lighting.
 - Line Crossing / Intrusion Zones – Trigger alerts when boundaries are crossed.
 - Object Left/Removed Detection – Notifies if a known trailer, float, or item is moved.
 - Face Detection/Recognition – Detects and optionally matches faces; check privacy laws before enabling.

Tip: Using motion detection is really only useful for unoccupied indoor settings. Expect many false alarms if you turn this on outdoors. Go for a camera with Smart detection or AI if possible.

9. Power & Connectivity: Choosing the right power and data link is as important as the camera.

- PoE (Power over Ethernet) – One cable for data and power; most reliable.
- Wi-Fi – Convenient but short-range; easily blocked by metal or buildings and vulnerable to jamming.
- 4G/Solar – For remote sites without cabling; watch excessive data costs for live streaming.
- Wireless Bridges – Create long-range “virtual Ethernet cables” for hard-to-reach areas; professional install recommended.

10. Recording & Storage: Do you want to record continuously or just events? You will need to match the storage capacity and storage type to your resolution and frame rate.

- **SD Card:** Cheapest, good for single cameras or backup, but limited for 24/7 recording.
- **NVR (Network Video Recorder):** Best for multi-camera setups; pair with a surveillance-rated HDD sized for your retention needs (e.g. 3TB for 20–30 days) then it will overwrite.
- **Cloud:** Enables remote viewing; often subscription-based and dependent on internet connectivity.
- **Video Storage Calculators:** can be found on the internet. For example: [Surveillance Hard Drive Storage Calculator | Western Digital](#)

11. Build Quality & Form Factor:

- IP Rating – Minimum IP66 for outdoor rural use; higher is better.
- IK Rating – Resistance to vandalism or impact.
- Style – Bullet and turret cameras suit most outdoor setups; domes are best indoors.
- Mounting Options – Wall, pole, or corner mounts can help achieve the best angles and mounting options for your building.

12. ONVIF: This stands for Open Network Video Interface Forum. It’s a good feature to have as it means you can integrate different brands and they can talk to each other.

13. Software Applications: This is a big subject we won’t cover in detail here. Make sure your camera has a quality mobile app, a desktop app or other software that allows you to view the camera live feed and playback.

14. Special Cameras:

License Plate Recognition (LPR) Cameras

"I want to read the license plate" is the number one request for people purchasing cameras for accessways and driveways. So let's break down why these cameras are a breed apart from standard cameras.

How LPR Cameras See License Plates at Night

a. Infrared (IR) Illumination:

- IR LEDs built into the camera flood the scene with invisible infrared light.
- License plates, especially reflective ones, bounce back IR light strongly.
- This allows the camera to "see" clearly at night, even in complete darkness.
- Unlike regular cameras, LPR cameras don't rely on ambient light. They create their own IR lighting, tuned for plate capture.

b. Optimised Shutter Speed:

- LPR cameras use a fast shutter speed to freeze motion, avoiding blur from fast-moving vehicles.
- This is especially critical at night, where long exposures on regular cameras cause motion blur.

c. Narrow Field of View (FOV):

- Most LPR cameras have a zoomed or cropped view specifically targeting the license plate area.
- This ensures high pixel density (pixels per plate), even at 10–30m distances.
- The camera is often angled to capture incoming or outgoing traffic lanes, not wide scenes.

d. Image Processing & AI OCR:

- After capturing the plate image, onboard or server-side software uses OCR (Optical Character Recognition) to convert it into text.
- At night, the contrast between reflective plates and darker surroundings helps OCR accuracy.

Visual Example: Imagine a car at night, headlights are on. LPR cameras use IR (not visible to the human eye). The reflective plate bounces IR back, appearing bright on camera. Fast shutter freezes motion. The camera captures a clean plate image, even at 80 km/h.

Bottomline: Regular cameras will fail at night, even during the day they may not have the shutter speed to capture the plate in motion.

Tip 1: Some LPR cameras are only useful for low speeds, think car parks, drive throughs or intersections. You really want an LPR camera that works at at least 80km/h. Cars typically can travel up a gravel driveway or rural road 40-80Km/Hr

Tip 2: Think hard about the location of your LPR camera.

- Will it alert you in time for an arriving visitor?
- Are there services (power and internet) at the ideal camera location?
- What is the cost of providing fixed internet and power / batteries and solar? This is usually an issue for driveway cameras, or you have to compromise on location.
- Is the area shaded, meaning solar panels cannot be used?

If Services Can be Provided: You will be able to use a standard LPR camera with streaming video. There are a number of good options, contact us for more information.

No Services Provided or Remote location: If using a **Video Streaming LPR** camera, you will have added expenses that could run into several thousand dollars, plus very high monthly data costs if using cellular (4G).

Thermal Cameras

We won't dwell on thermal cameras. They are very impressive for military or high end commercial applications and would be fantastic in rural settings, but are expensive at present. Plus with stock and other critters around the farm we would not advise using heat detection as an alert mechanism.

Alternatively a **thermal scope** can be a good tool for helping to examine a noise late at night without engaging. You can purchase these from retailers.

Bottomline: Matching these specs to your property's needs is what turns "just another camera" into a reliable security asset. In rural settings, it's not about buying the most expensive gear. It's about buying the right gear for the conditions and distances you face. If in doubt, talk to a Security Consultant, they will quote you and you can use this guide to check their proposal.

Shortlist of Camera Super Stars

1. **Dual Lens PTZ Camera:** One of our most popular and for very good reason.
 - With a wide view fixed lens and a PTZ lens you can be looking at two areas, for example a wide view of a yard and sheds and the accessway to them at the same time.
 - The PTZ lens can zoom optically 25X. That means you can view objects hundreds of meters away. Even some stock up on a hill, making it more than just a security device.
 - The PTZ lens can move 360 degrees, meaning you can get a complete look around your surroundings.
 - Night vision is extraordinary, over 100m very clearly and sometimes more.
 - The PTZ can zoom and track a moving object upon detection such as a vehicle or person, giving you the best chance to ID them.
 - Microphone and speaker to have a “chat” to the intruder.
 - Hugely cost effective, if you have line of sight (no shelter belts or buildings) these cameras can replace several standard cameras.
 - Use in yards and wide open spaces.



2. **PlateAlert:** is a vehicle-sensing camera for rural accessways and roads. It sends push notifications and a snapshot to your phone when a vehicle arrives with a clear view of the license plate day or night.

- No Wi-Fi required, works on 4G
- You won't be caught out by excessive 4G data charges as it uses minimal data.
- Works on Solar, no power needed.
- Instant push notification alerts with the vehicle snapshot
- License Plate capture even at night.
- Designed for accessways and rural roads.
- 30-day image retention
- It can sense vehicles up to 80km/hr.
- Affordable hardware compared to some streaming LPR options.
- DIY install - available from FarmAlert only, contact us for more information.



3. **8MP Active Deterrence Camera:** The lower cost workhorse.

- A single 2.8mm lens will give you great quality with a wide 110deg field of view.
- Switching to full colour night vision can help see the colour of objects at night or keep in IR mode for better long distance clarity.
- Use around the house entrance and in corners where intruders can hide.
- Active deterrence can flash an LED light or even a red and blue light. It's not bright and loud like an alarm system but could be enough to get their attention.
- Needs good networking / connection to the internet.

- 4. Alarm System Cameras:** Greater integration into the alarm system means a much slicker interaction for the user.
- Some Alarm Systems provide their own branded cameras and NVR.
 - This means you get full use of camera features with one mobile app. For example: Alarm Sensor is triggered, this runs a video scenario with a direct link to the camera recording. It's slick and means you do not have to bounce between apps or find that footage manually.
 - There can be a tradeoff on camera specification, especially night vision may be limited to 30m.

Alarm Systems - What's on the Market?

Commercial-grade Alarm Systems.

Many traditional alarm systems at this point in time are not suited to rural areas as they are wired. There are now wireless options on the market. **Ajax** is a world leading brand out of the Ukraine. While developed for commercial and residential applications, this brand is revolutionising how an alarm system can work in a rural environment. With integration knowledge and experience it can be used as perimeter security for fences and gates, fuel accessways, sheds, vehicles as well as the house. These types of alarm systems are only available through a professional security installer.

Other strong mentions are **Parabeam**, a great little kiwi business who provides excellent beam sensing options to the security industry.

Tank monitoring solutions. There are several companies offering tank monitoring solutions for fuel, milk and water. While they have multiple operational benefits, being used for security is not as effective. For example, it's great to know fuel has been taken but you will have to ask critical questions when considering this as a security option.

1. When do you get the alert, after the fuel is taken?
2. Will it be in time to act?
3. Will the tank be vandalised in the act of taking fuel? Would it be better to prevent fuel being taken in the first place using a perimeter alarm and siren?

Consumer-grade Alarm Systems

Most often represented as driveway beams, they offer very little other than sounding an alarm in the house. Unless you spend all your time at home, they are a waste of money but could be 'part of a solution'.

Three Key Reasons to Choose an Alarm System:

1. **Immediate Deterrent** – A loud **siren and strobe** activate on detection, scaring off intruders instantly.
2. **Accurate Detection** – Smart sensors with minimal false alerts ensure **trustworthy performance**.
3. **Flexible Deployment** – **Wireless sensors** can be placed wherever you need them without costly cabling or trenching.

How It Works

At the heart of every alarm system is the **Alarm Controller**, also known as a **Hub** or **Base Station**.

This unit connects to your **internet** and is typically backed by a **battery**, so your system **remains active during power cuts or internet outages**, something CCTV cameras often can't offer.

You can connect a wide range of **wireless intrusion sensors** that are:

- **Highly accurate**
- **Battery or solar powered**
- Able to operate over **long distances**. We have installed solutions that can operate over 3 km (and more is possible).

These devices can be placed exactly where you need protection, at **gates, sheds, accessways, fuel stores, electric fences**, trailers and equipment and more.

Smart Features of an Alarm System

- **Arm/disarm remotely** or set automatic schedules
- **Receive instant alerts** to your phone or monitoring service
- **Trigger panic alarms** for personal safety
- Add **smoke and fire detectors** for 24/7 peace of mind, even when you're away!
- **Automate** lighting, gates, pumps, or any device with **low or mains voltage**

Sensor device options for an Alarm System

The following sensors are battery powered, lasting for years before the batteries have to be replaced. They can operate at a long range from a few hundred meters to several kilometers in some cases from your Alarm Hub. Alarm Hubs can also work using solar and 4G data connection, meaning security can now be placed almost anywhere.

- **Beam sensors** detect anything that crosses the beam, set across an open area such as a driveway, it can be installed at a height for vehicles and people while ignoring small animals and flying birds. They can be discretely installed and integrated into the Alarm system.
- **SmartMotion sensors** detect heat and motion and are immune to small animals or pets. These devices come in a variety of forms that can act as a narrow curtain spanning up to 30m to protect the face of a building, or protecting a sensitive area up to 15m for example in front of a fuel tank.

- **MotionDetect Photo Cameras** work in the same way as a SmartMotion detector but also offer the ability to send photo images of the event to your phone so you can determine the cause.
- **Electric fence sensors** can be secured with a special device that detects tampering or cutting of the fence wire. It is installed near your mains powered energizer and integrated wirelessly with your Alarm system.
- **Gate / door sensors** can be installed discreetly to detect that the gate or door has been opened or closed with an instant alarm. You can check on your phone what the status of a gate is across your property. These devices can also detect movement or tampering on vehicles, trailers and equipment.
- **Relays** for activating other hardware such as strobe lights, security lights, gates etc.
- **Panic button** for activating a panic alarm, giving other users an alert that something is wrong and showing your location.
- **Fire detection** sends an alert if there is smoke or a fire detected. Even if you are away from the property. It will sound an audible alarm at location.
- **Flood detection** sends an alert if there is a flood inside a building. A water valve can be automatically switched off.
- **Sirens** can be activated in case of an alarm, they include a strobe light and they can be installed anywhere within range of the Alarm Hub or an Range Extender. A siren is a critical part of an alarm system. It does not matter if the neighbours do or don't hear the siren, even if you don't hear it (your phone will send you an alert). From a criminologist's point of view, the most important thing is that the intruder hears it. It will trigger a response in the intruder to panic and leave, not wanting to be caught. It is highly likely to prevent the crime from happening, and prevent you from coming face to face with the intruder.

Bottomline: There is an extensive range of options available to secure a rural property with alarm system sensors. Not just reliable with **wide area coverage**, it can be tailored to your needs and grow over time or even be redeployed to other areas.

Rural and Lifestyle Property scenarios

Let's take a closer look at a typical **farm or lifestyle block** and explore the vulnerabilities that alarm and camera systems can help you secure at a sensible level. Whether it's machinery, sheds, stock handling areas, or perimeter gates, an alarm system can **adapt to your layout and work independently of power or internet coverage** in many locations.

Minimal Security

You have one accessway to the property, the property is hard to access otherwise with good fencing and/or vegetation on your perimeter and no obvious publicly viewable targets.

A PlateAlert camera or an Alarm system including an integrated Driveway Beam sensor with an Alarm siren or strobe and a supporting driveway facing camera will be effective.

Medium Security

You have 2 or more accessways, including a main drive, a separate gated accessway and want to secure the yard as well as the house entrance.

In this scenario a PlateAlert camera or an Alarm system including an integrated Driveway Beam sensor with an Alarm siren or strobe and a supporting driveway facing camera for the main drive.

You can include a gate sensor for the yard accessway that is permanently armed or can alert you if the gate is opened. With mains power in the yard, you have reliably extended the internet using a Wireless Bridge. On your shed you have a dual curtain beam sensor that protects the front of the open and closed bays from intrusion, and one on the stable to protect your tack. If there is an intruder it will sound a local alarm siren and notify you via a phone alert..

A Dual Lens PTZ camera can help you see 100's of meters around the yard, and beyond. Not just verifying the cause of the alarm, but keeping an eye on things and even what the stock may be doing in another paddock up on the hill.

Maximum Security

- You have a large farm, multiple accessways and border public land.
- You might just live in an area where you have been targeted many times and need it to stop.
- You may have high value assets that are not replaceable.
- You want Fort Knox and peace of mind for your loved ones.

Security can be in two layers. Starting with your perimeter with a sensor for your electric boundary fence, all gates and driveways. Detecting intrusion at your boundary is the best bet for crime prevention, with good signage.

You could share a PlateAlert camera with neighbours if you live on a rural road that leads to your properties. This will harden your area to crime.

Inside your property, create secure areas with outdoor wireless sensors and supporting cameras and alarm sirens. Any towable or moveable assets can have trackers and a motion / tamper alert. A network of cameras supports 24/7 monitoring and recording.

Smart automation and security access controls allow only permitted people into certain areas.

Legal and Ethical Security Practices

Navigate New Zealand's privacy laws and regulations to implement compliance. Ensure your security efforts respect ethical boundaries.

General

When protecting your property, it's not just about what **you can do**, it's also about what **you should do**. In New Zealand, privacy laws are designed to protect individuals' rights, even when they're on or near your land. That means any security system, whether it's cameras, alarms, or sensors, need to be installed and used **with care and consideration**.

For example, CCTV should only monitor your own property, not your neighbour's paddock or a public road unless there's a clear and justifiable reason. And if you're recording, it's best practice to let people know, even in rural areas. A simple sign does the trick.

Employees and Contractors

If you have employees or contractors enter your property you are also obliged to have a CCTV Policy. We can send you a draft template if you like, just send an email to info@farmalert.net requesting one.

Sharing Information

Just as crucial is how we handle the **information we capture**, especially in rural communities where word travels fast. Sharing images or footage publicly, for example, on social media, might feel like a quick way to raise awareness, but it comes with serious responsibility. It's essential to avoid **jumping to conclusions** or **profiling individuals** based on how they look, what they're wearing, their age, or cultural background.

Teenagers hanging out at a gate, or someone unfamiliar walking down a gravel road, aren't necessarily threats. Before publishing or distributing images, ask yourself: *Is this necessary? Am I being fair? Could this unfairly damage someone's reputation?* Is there compelling evidence that they are breaking the law or acting suspiciously without question?

Bottomline: Think before you act. If you are still unsure you can find all the privacy information and tools you need at [Privacy Commissioner](#)

Responding to Crime and Recovering Quickly

Learn actionable steps to minimise losses and recover effectively after an incident. Gain insights into addressing delays in law enforcement response with proactive strategies. Learn how to work with Police.

When a Crime Happens

Whether it's a break-in, theft, or vandalism, it can leave you feeling shaken and uncertain about what to do next. The key is having a plan in place before it ever happens. Simple steps like documenting your assets, securing high-value areas, and setting up alert-based monitoring can drastically reduce losses. If an incident does occur, acting quickly to preserve evidence (like snapshots or footage), notifying your insurer, and reviewing how the intruder gained access will help you bounce back faster and smarter. Recovery isn't just about cleaning up; it's about learning, adapting, and coming back stronger.

Remember, if there is a life threatening emergency dial 111. You will be a top priority.

If the crime has already happened, you can dial 105, or go to the Police 105 website where you can report online.

[105 Police Non-Emergency Online Reporting | New Zealand Police](#)

Police Response

Let's be real, in rural areas or during busy periods, police response times can be slower than we'd like. That's why proactive strategies are essential. Alarm systems that trigger loud sirens and strobes can scare off intruders before they get far.

Sharing real-time alerts with neighbours or a community group builds an extra layer of protection, creating what's often called a "virtual fence." Police also refer to this as "targeted hardening"

Having remote access to your cameras or alarm notifications means you're not waiting around, you're already one step ahead, gathering the information police will need.

Your local police are key allies in protecting your property but they work best when you work *with* them. That means reporting ALL incidents, no matter how minor, and providing clear,

helpful evidence when you can: camera footage, sensor timestamps, or a written account of what happened.

We often hear community skepticism about Police, and they tell us about lack of reporting. Get the picture here?

The simple fact is if you don't report they can't do something about it. The only way they can hold criminals to account is with enough evidence. Sometimes there might not be enough evidence to act on. Other times it may take a while to follow up due to more urgent priorities. If you feel the Police have not done their job, you can refer the case to the Independent Police Complaints Authority.

Building a good relationship with your local rural or community officer can also make a real difference. Many are keen to collaborate and offer advice. The more they know about your setup and what you've experienced with detailed information, the more effective their support will be and the more empowered you'll feel in return.

Bottomline: The goal is to reduce your dependence on a fast response and instead focus on early detection and immediate deterrence.

Building a Resilient Rural Community

Harness the power of collaboration and neighborhood watch programs to safeguard your property.

Why?

Working together as a community can be the best and most effective thing you can do.

It brings awareness which helps collate information, making it easier for Police to catch offenders and hold them to account. It hardens your community against crime.

Usually there are just a few bad actors in the community that cause most of the issues. Make it too hard for them and there are two outcomes. They either leave the area or they learn and stop doing what they do.

Tip: Here are a few tools, already available that allow a community to work together.

Community Patrol NZ

CPNZ provides a great voluntary service. Get their local contact details so you can let them know any issues or even volunteer yourself.

If there are patrols in your area perhaps speak to your local council representative and CPNZ and seek help getting one established. [Community Patrols of New Zealand](#)

Neighbourhood Support

Neighbourhood Support is another organisation that does great work connecting communities together for common good. Contact your local representative to get more information and get involved! [Neighbourhood Support NZ](#)

Youth Groups

Across rural New Zealand, it's often said that young people don't have enough to do. Sometimes, that lack of direction can lead to mischief or poor choices. Yes, teenagers can be

impulsive and unaware of consequences, but let's be honest, many of us remember going through that stage ourselves. Rather than jumping straight to judgment, it's worth approaching youth behaviour with a little perspective and patience.

That doesn't mean turning a blind eye to unlawful actions, but it does mean **seeking to understand before we react**. Often, the most effective approach is to be a positive influence, a role model who offers guidance, not criticism.

Whether it's introducing them to meaningful community activities, sports, or projects they can take pride in, **engagement is far more powerful than enforcement**. When young people feel seen, heard, and valued, they're far more likely to contribute positively to the community they're part of.

CrimeAlert

CrimeAlert is a New Zealand-based incident reporting app designed to connect everyday people with their local community in real time. Approved by New Zealand Police, it allows users to instantly notify others nearby when something suspicious or criminal is happening directly to their phones, without the delays and distractions of social media.

Unlike posts that often get buried or missed on community Facebook pages, **CrimeAlert delivers timely, targeted alerts**, giving people a chance to protect themselves, safeguard their property, or even provide critical witness information that helps Police do their job more effectively. It's fast, direct, and focused on real-time awareness.

CrimeAlert is a tool that you pay for, but near the price of a cup of coffee per year, it's one of the most cost-effective tools you can use to strengthen safety and awareness in your neighbourhood en masse.

Imagine the impact if many people in your area were using it. **More eyes open, more informed neighbours, and safer streets for everyone.**

Importantly, CrimeAlert also **respects your privacy**, unlike many public forums. Unlike social media its singular purpose is to report and alert not treat you as the product.

Your data is safe and secure and you remain anonymous in your reporting and incident feedback.

We strongly encourage you to download CrimeAlert from Apple's App Store or Google Play, share it with your local network. When communities are connected, they're stronger.

Confronting an Intruder on Your Rural Property: The Law

If I catch the buggers, they will get what's coming to them?

Farmers' Tough Talk vs. Harsh Reality

On rural New Zealand farms, it's not uncommon to hear bold promises about dealing with intruders. Many male farmers talk of "*sorting it out*" themselves in pub conversations you might hear quips like, "*I'm not going out there with a pen and paper*" or "*You can't just investigate a midnight noise with a cup of tea in your hand*".

Frustration runs high over frequent thefts and slow police response in isolated areas. In fact, a Federated Farmers survey found more than three-quarters of farmers said they would personally confront intruders (often after a quick call to police or to a neighbor) rather than simply wait for officers to arrive. As one Northland farming leader put it, "*Farmers are sick and tired of these thieving [people] coming on to their farms... We've had a gutsful*". The prevailing sentiment is that on remote properties, "*you cannot expect to have immediate police protection*", so locals feel they have a right to defend their own. Neighbors often express sympathy or even approval when a farmer strikes back at a thief ("*a lot of people will say 'good job'*").

However, rhetoric aside, the reality of a face-to-face intruder confrontation is far more frightening and legally complex than those offhand remarks suggest.

When that "*frightening moment*" actually arrives - an intruder in your home or on your land - split-second decisions can mean life or injury or even death, and "*the line*" between self-defense and unlawful violence becomes a crucial issue. It's easy to boast about "*shoot first, ask questions later*," but real confrontations have taught many farmers hard lessons about the consequences.

In the following sections, we'll look at some real New Zealand cases, clarify the law on self-defense, and then outline expert-backed techniques for handling an aggressive intruder as safely as possible.

Lessons from Real-Life Confrontations

Case studies from the last 15 years show how differently intruder encounters can play out – and how the justice system responds:

- **Ramarama Farm Stabbing (2012):** In a rural South Auckland incident, a property owner stumbled upon an intruder, leading to a violent altercation. The intruder (40-year-old David Cunningham) died of stab wounds at the scene^[9]. After a thorough homicide investigation, police decided no charges would be laid against the occupier. They concluded there was insufficient evidence to prove the farmer *wasn't* acting in self-defense. Police emphasised that to charge the resident, they'd need to be satisfied he was not defending himself – a threshold not met in this case. (The victim's family, understandably upset, were told of the decision in advance.) Notably, this case was accompanied by publicised police advice about confronting intruders: *“Be prepared to physically defend yourself. The most vulnerable parts of an attacker's body are the eyes, nose and genital area... You are allowed to use force ... in self-defence, but be aware that if you use something as a weapon... it could be turned against you.”* These words underscore both the peril and the caution required in such confrontations.
- **The Burr Farm Invasion (October 2020):** In Piopio (King Country), 67-year-old farmer Bill Burr and his son were attacked at 1:45am by two intruders who broke in intending to steal property. The intruders brutally assaulted Burr (hitting him over the head with a bottle) and one threatened to stab him. In the chaos that followed, the father and son fought back ferociously – at one point cutting off the tip of a teen intruder's finger – and managed to subdue the intruders. Burr later admitted, *“For eight minutes I fought for my life”*, and he remained unrepentant about doing whatever it took to survive. Police charged the pair with multiple serious violence offenses, and the incident went to a high-profile trial in 2022. The jury, after hearing the full story of the home invasion, acquitted Bill Burr and his son of all charges on self-defense grounds. The court accepted they genuinely feared for their lives and used the force they deemed necessary. It wasn't a total vindication, however – Burr was later sentenced on firearms charges, because he had kept unlicensed, loaded guns at home (which he brandished during the incident). The judge noted Burr showed *“no remorse”* and felt *“entitled”* to use a firearm for protection, reflecting that he, like many farmers, truly believed he had done the right thing. The outcome: community work and detention for the gun offences, but no punishment for the defensive violence. This case highlights that even when you beat the criminal charges, there can be legal consequences (e.g. firearms penalties) if you stepped outside other laws.

- **Lloyd Bonnar’s Shotgun Encounter (2007):** Not all confrontations end in injury. Morrinsville farmer Lloyd Bonnar faced intruders stealing fuel from his farm one midnight. He grabbed a shotgun (initially unloaded) and went with his wife in their truck to investigate. When they found two thieves in a ute, Bonnar blocked their escape with his vehicle. As the intruders drove erratically, he loaded the shotgun and fired two warning shots – spaced a couple minutes apart – into the air. The shots were not aimed at the offenders, but they scared the intruders into surrendering on the ground. Bonnar’s wife called police, and the pair of thieves were arrested without anyone being hurt. Police scrutinised Bonnar’s actions closely, given the use of a firearm, even involving forensic experts. In the end, authorities decided not to charge Bonnar; his actions were deemed justified under the Crimes Act self-defense and property defense provisions. A senior detective acknowledged the *“ramifications of cases of this nature are far reaching”* and that each case must be evaluated on its own facts. Importantly, the police stressed that this outcome did not signal an endorsement of arming oneself: *“The decision not to prosecute... is not an indication that Police endorse possession of firearms for protective purposes.”* In other words, Bonnar’s choices may have been deemed reasonable in that scenario, but police do *not* want rural folks thinking they should all grab the shotgun when there’s a noise outside.

- **Fatal Shooting in Opotiki (2007):** In a more extreme case, David Allen, a Bay of Plenty farm manager, shot and killed a man who came to his isolated property and threatened to kill him over a financial dispute. The intruder, a gang associate, had beaten Allen badly with a fence post two weeks prior, so Allen was on high alert. When the man returned demanding money and tried to force entry, Allen took a .303 rifle and fired once from close range, mortally wounding the intruder who he believed was reaching for a weapon. No weapon was found on the dead man, and Allen was charged with murder, forcing him to stand trial and justify his actions in court. After a five-hour deliberation, a jury acquitted Allen of both murder and manslaughter, accepting that he acted in self-defense under the circumstances. His lawyer summed it up: *“Mr Allen has committed no offence... People are entitled to the security of their own homes and to defend themselves against attack.”* Still, the trial and months in custody took a toll – Allen did not return to live at that remote farm, understandably shaken by the ordeal. This case underscores that lethal force can be deemed lawful in New Zealand, but only when facing a clear and imminent threat to life – and even then, you may have to convince a jury it truly was self-defense.

These Cases Teach Several Key Lessons

First, intruder confrontations can escalate unpredictably, sometimes ending with the intruder injured or killed, or the homeowner facing charges or both. Some farmers, like Burr and Allen, had to endure criminal trials to clear their names, even though they ultimately walked free. Second, police and courts will investigate each incident thoroughly. If you seriously injure or kill someone, you should expect to be treated as a possible offender until the facts establish otherwise. And third, these examples show that while the law *does* allow force (even lethal force) in genuine self-defense, those situations tend to involve clear danger, such as being attacked with a weapon, being threatened with death, or facing multiple violent intruders.

Using force solely to protect *property* (like a stolen quad bike or gasoline) is far more legally fraught – which leads to the next section on what the law actually permits.

Know the Law: What You Can and Can't Do

When it comes to defending yourself and your property, New Zealand law draws a line between reasonable self-defense and unlawful violence. It's vital to understand these boundaries before you ever find yourself toe-to-toe with an intruder. Here are the key legal principles:

- **Self-Defense (People Protection):** Section 48 of the Crimes Act 1961 is NZ's self-defense law. In simple terms, it says you are justified in using reasonable force to defend yourself or someone else from attack. The force used must be what you honestly believe is necessary at the time to protect against danger. This gives law-abiding citizens the right to fight back when faced with violence, even to the point of using deadly force if that is truly the only way to prevent serious harm or death. However – and this is crucial – what counts as “reasonable” will be judged after the fact. Authorities will ask: Was your belief that you were in danger honest and reasonable? And was the level of force you used proportionate to that threat? If an intruder is charging at you with a knife, using a weapon to disable them may be deemed reasonable. But shooting at someone's back as they run off with your TV, for example, would almost certainly not qualify as self-defense (there's no immediate threat to life at that moment).
- **Defending Your Home & Property:** New Zealand law also provides specific defenses for protecting property, but these are much more limited. Under various sections of the Crimes Act (sections 52–56), a person in possession of property can use reasonable force to prevent trespass or theft – but not force that causes bodily harm in doing so[49]. In fact, the law explicitly says if you're removing a trespasser or resisting a burglar, you “do not permit” striking or injuring them in the process. You can grab, hold, push, or block

a trespasser to stop them, as long as it's proportionate and not likely to inflict more than minor harm. For example, dragging an intruder out your door by the shirt might be okay; beating them with a baseball bat once they're down is not. There's even a provision (Section 55) allowing necessary force to prevent a forcible break-in of your dwelling – essentially giving you leeway to brace a door or shove someone back out a window they're smashing. But again, if at that point the intruder turns and runs, you cannot legally chase them down and attack out of anger or vengeance. The overarching principle: defend yourself and others first and foremost; use only as much force as needed to neutralise an immediate threat. Property is secondary. No piece of farm equipment or cash drawer is worth landing a manslaughter charge – or getting yourself killed by escalating a conflict.

- **You May Still Face Scrutiny:** It's important to realise that invoking “self-defense” is not an automatic immunity. Police and prosecutors will look at the circumstances to decide if charges are warranted. As one legal summary puts it, self-defense and reasonable force do not provide immunity from prosecution – unless it's crystal clear your actions were appropriate, you may have to “explain [your] justification to a criminal court.” This means even if you firmly believe you did the right thing, you might be arrested and put before a jury to convince them as well. In practice, New Zealand authorities have shown restraint in charging homeowners when evidence strongly supports self-defense (as seen in the cases above). But they have* brought charges when facts were ambiguous or suggested excessive force – leaving it to the courts to decide.
- **If You Harm an Intruder:** be prepared to articulate why you truly feared for your safety and how your response was necessary. If you go beyond what the average person (or juror) would consider reasonable, you do risk criminal liability.
- **Firearms Caution:** New Zealand does not have a US-style “castle doctrine” or stand-your-ground law that outright permits shooting an intruder. Firearms are a particularly thorny issue. You are only justified in using a gun if the situation genuinely calls for lethal force in self-defense. Simply finding someone stealing your diesel tank doesn't qualify – and confronting them with a firearm can backfire legally. Police have publicly warned that they do not encourage arming yourself for protection]. Owning firearms requires a license, and using them irresponsibly (like firing “warning shots” in unsafe conditions) can lead to charges unrelated to the intruder (such as unlawful discharge or endangerment). In short, a gun is not a get-out-of-jail-free card – in fact, introducing a weapon can escalate a situation and carries legal risks of its own. Many farmers understandably keep rifles for pest control or hunting, but think very carefully before grabbing the gun in an intruder scenario unless lives are at stake.

- **Expert and Police Perspectives:** Rural community leaders have urged the government to improve rural policing so that farmers “are not forced to take the law into their own hands to protect their families”. Police themselves stress that you should never take the law into your own hands or take unnecessary risks during a crime. There is a recognition that isolated residents feel vulnerable – one survey showed only 17% of farmers would simply call 111 and wait, while the rest would be inclined to intervene personally. However, the safest approach, legally and physically, is to stay within the law’s limits: use force only if you must to protect people, and always be the one who tries to avoid violence if possible. Remember that if you overstep – for instance, by seriously injuring a thief who wasn’t threatening you – you could end up in the defendant’s chair.

The Bottomline: New Zealand law allows you to defend yourself and your home, but it expects you to be reasonable, not retaliatory. Stopping an intruder from harming you is one thing; chasing them down or administering “farm justice” is another. Keep these legal boundaries in mind so that, in the heat of the moment, you don’t cross a line that could land you in trouble.

Safe and Smart Confrontation

If you do come face to face with an intruder on your rural property, your goal should be to protect yourself and your family while minimising the chance of violence.

Security professionals and police trainers emphasise strategies that prioritise safety, de-escalation, and quick help. Here are some world-class confrontation techniques and tips for handling the situation as safely as possible:

1. Prioritise Personal Safety Over Property

No possession is worth your life or even an injury.

- Your first thought should be for your own safety (and that of anyone with you), not your tractor, fuel or tools. If you can avoid a direct confrontation, do so.
- Never let pride or anger push you into an unnecessary clash. Incidents can spiral out of control faster than you think.
- It's better to lose some equipment than to be seriously injured (or to injure someone else and face legal consequences).

2. Call for Backup Immediately

The moment you suspect an intruder is present, call 111 (or shout for someone to do so).

- Do this as soon as you safely can, before engaging with the intruder. On a farm, that might mean dialing emergency services on your mobile while you're still hidden or at a distance. Give the dispatcher your RAPID number/address and any details quietly, if possible.
- Even if police are miles away, starting the call early gets you in the system. If you have family or farmhands around, designate someone to make the call and alert neighbors while you handle the immediate situation. The presence of police on the way might also psychologically pressure an intruder to flee.

3. Avoid Direct Engagement if Possible

Stealth and distance can be your allies.

- If you arrive home and see signs of a break-in (broken window, open door) or hear intruders, do not rush inside – the burglar could still be there. Instead, retreat to a safe spot (like a neighbor’s house or behind cover) and call the police.
- Similarly, if you’re outside and spot an intruder at the shed or in the paddock, do not corner them. Keep eyes on them from a distance if you can do so safely, but maintain an escape route for yourself.
- The best outcome is if the intruder leaves without any confrontation. Remember, an intruder who hasn’t noticed you may just grab and go; surprising them could provoke a dangerous reaction. Whenever possible, **“try to avoid contact with the intruder”** altogether.

4. Secure Yourself or Escape

World-class security training often teaches the “Run, Hide, Fight” model (in that order).

- If an intruder is in your house and you become aware before they see you, quickly decide whether you can safely exit the home or if you should hide and barricade.
- Escape is ideal if you can slip out and get to help. If escape isn’t feasible, lock yourself (and any family) in a secure room – a bedroom or office with a sturdy door – and call 111. Many safety experts recommend having a pre-designated “safe room” with a solid door, a strong lock or brace, and a charged phone. While hiding, arm yourself with something as a precaution (even a heavy flashlight) but only as a last resort. The point is to buy time for police to arrive, not to engage. Conversely, if the intruder blocks your exit path, you might choose to flee through a window – do whatever it takes to get out safely. Plan your escape routes in advance (e.g., which window or door could you use, is there a second way off the property). This quick decision-making – fight or flight – is critical and much easier if you’ve mentally rehearsed it beforehand.

5. If Confrontation Is Unavoidable

Stay calm and assertive

- You may find yourself suddenly face-to-face with the intruder – for instance, turning a corner in your hallway or in the shed or yard and there they are. In that adrenaline-charged moment, take a breath and try to stay as composed as possible.

- Experts advise that you should not charge at the intruder in rage, but also not cower passively. Instead, adopt a confident, assertive demeanor. Stand up straight, square your shoulders, and keep your head up. “Often the last thing [intruders] want is a battle,” so projecting that you are not an easy target can deter them.
- In a firm voice, you can issue a clear command like “Get out! The police are coming!”. Many security professionals suggest using short, shouted phrases (e.g. “Leave now!” or “I see you – get out!”) to make it obvious you’re alert and unafraid. This might convince a would-be thief to bolt for the door.

6. Use Noise and Light as Weapons

An Alarm is a powerful tool.

- If you haven’t already, trigger any alarms you have: car alarm, house security alarm, personal panic alarm. Anything that makes a loud noise.
- Yelling loudly can also help: shout not only to scare the intruder but in a way that might alert neighbors (e.g. “Help! Intruder! Call the police!”). Noise increases the intruder’s fear of being caught.
- If it’s dark, and you have access to lights, flood the area with light – flip on outdoor floodlights or use a strong torch/spotlight on the intruder’s position. A sudden blast of light can disorient them and remove the cover of darkness they were counting on. Some farmers keep high-powered torches or spotlights by the bed for this purpose.
- The goal is to make the intruder feel exposed and pressured to flee. (Breaking something like a window is also mentioned in safety advice as a way to make a commotion and signal for help, but use caution to avoid injuring yourself.)

7. Feign Numbers If You’re Alone

A clever psychological tactic if you’re by yourself is to pretend you’re not alone.

- Call out as if to another person. “Dave, grab the gun!” or “Honey, call the cops now!” even if there is no “Dave” or “honey” there.
- The idea is to make the intruder think they’re outnumbered or already being reported. According to police advice, “Call out to somebody else in the house to phone the Police, even if you are alone.” This bluff can sow doubt in the intruder’s mind and might prevent them from advancing on you.

8. De-Escalate if Possible

Not every intruder is out to physically harm you.

- Some are just desperate or scared themselves. If an intruder seems hesitant or non-aggressive (for example, they're startled that you've caught them), you can attempt a de-escalation: keep a safe distance and say firmly, "I don't want anyone hurt. Take it easy and just go." In some cases, simply allowing the intruder a chance to leave peacefully is the best outcome.
- Police advice suggests that if noise and shouting haven't driven the intruder off, you can try to calmly but firmly tell them to leave. Use a tone that is authoritative but not panicked. The intruder may decide it's not worth the confrontation and retreat.
- Do not engage in insults or provocation. The goal is to get them gone, not to win an argument. Keep in mind de-escalation won't work on someone violently intent on hurting you (in that case, focus on self-defense), but many burglars are **not** looking for a fight and will run if given the chance.

9. Be Ready to Defend Yourself Physically

If all the above fails, the intruder turns aggressive or attacks, you must defend yourself.

- At this point, the law and common sense align: you are allowed to use force to protect yourself from an attacker. Aim to incapacitate or stun the intruder just enough to stop the attack and get away; you are not trying to punish them.
- Security experts train people to target the body's natural weak points. "The most vulnerable parts of an attacker's body are the eyes, nose and genital area," as New Zealand Police advise. Go for the eyes, even a quick jab or throw of an object toward the eyes can startle and blind them momentarily. Strike the nose with the heel of your palm or your elbow if they're in range; a hard hit to the nose is extremely painful and can disrupt their vision with tears. Kick the groin (genitals) as hard as you can with your knee or foot – this can drop even a larger man to the ground in agony. Keep attacking these sensitive targets until you have an opportunity to escape.
- Yell loudly the whole time. Not only to summon help, but also because it can unnerve your attacker and adrenaline-fuel your strikes.

10. Improvised Weapons

Use caution

- In a farm setting, you might have tools or objects at hand, a heavy torch, a piece of timber, a shovel etc. These can certainly even the odds if you are smaller or outnumbered. However, be aware of the risk: “if you use something as a weapon in self-defence, it could be turned against you,” the Police warn.
- Only grab a weapon if you’re prepared to use it effectively and to keep it out of the intruder’s hands. For instance, a rifle or shotgun in untrained hands could be wrested away and used by the intruder which is a worst-case scenario.
- If you do arm yourself, try not to brandish or threaten with the weapon from a distance (which gives them time to react); instead, use it swiftly and decisively if required and then try to get away.
- For example, a stout farm torch can be used to deliver a quick strike to the intruder’s head or arms at close range, but waving it at them from 6 feet away might just invite them to grab it. Never escalate to a weapon unless you feel it’s absolutely necessary for protection.
- The law will look at whether grabbing that weapon was reasonable under the circumstances – so save it for when you genuinely fear for your life or physical safety.

11. Know When to Stop

If you manage to disable or disarm the intruder, stop your counterattack as soon as they are no longer a threat.

- Once they’re fleeing or incapacitated, your job is done. Do not continue using force. For instance, if an intruder drops to the ground injured and is surrendering or unconscious, do not keep hitting.
- Doing so not only crosses into unlawful territory (it’s no longer self-defense at that point), but it also puts you at unnecessary risk (the intruder could be playing possum or might recover and retaliate if you approach). Instead, create distance. If you can do so safely, leave the area and go to a secure location until police arrive.
- If the intruder is immobilised on the ground and you’re unable to retreat (say, you’re in a remote area and they might re-attack when they recover), you could quickly restrain them e.g. using zip ties or bailing string on their hands, but only if it can be done without further violence.
- Be sure to tell the police immediately that the person is down and needs an ambulance if injured.

12. The Aftermath

Call for Help and Don't Tamper with Evidence.

- In the best case, the intruder runs off; worst case, they or you or they are badly hurt. Either way, as soon as you're safe, get back on the phone with the police if possible (or have the person on the line relay updates).
- If the intruder fled, give a description (clothing, vehicle, direction of travel) but do not chase them in the dark, you could be walking into a trap or another attacker outside.
- If the intruder is still on-site and neutralised, inform police so they can send medical aid.
- Do not move evidence or weapons around – for example, if you had to use a knife or if the intruder dropped something, leave it where it is once it's safe to do so. These will be important for the investigation, and you want the scene to reflect that you acted in self-defense.
- Take a moment to also check yourself and others for injuries (shock can mask pain, and you might not realise you've been cut or hurt).

Bottomline: By following these steps, you greatly increase your chances of coming out of a confrontation unharmed while also staying on the right side of the law. Security professionals train for countless scenarios, but the common thread is awareness, quick thinking, and controlled response. Rural properties have the disadvantage of isolation, but you can compensate by having a plan and keeping a cool head if an intruder appears.

For Rural Women: Staying Safe and Avoiding Confrontation

Rural women are some of the most resourceful, capable people you'll ever meet. You can tail a lamb, back a trailer, manage a business, and still have a loaf in the oven before lunch. But if you're alone on the property whether you live solo, your partner's away, or you just happen to be first on the scene, dealing with a suspicious person takes a different kind of thinking.

1. Prevention is Your Best Ally

The safest confrontation is the one that never happens.

- Make your presence known. A barking dog, motion sensor lights, or even a radio playing near the house or shed can deter someone who thinks the place is empty.
- Use your tech. Cameras (like PlateAlert) and driveway alarms give you eyes and ears before you step outside.
- Keep doors and vehicles locked. Even in the middle of the day. Opportunistic offenders look for easy wins.

2. If You See Something - Pause Before Acting

Your instinct might be to “go check it out,” but that’s exactly when risk spikes.

- Stay inside, Move to a safe room or secure part of the house.
- Get on the phone early. Call 111 and clearly describe what’s happening.
- Gather information. From a window, take note of vehicle rego, clothing, build, and direction of travel. These details are gold for the Police.

3. Avoid Direct Confrontation

Security professionals worldwide agree, closing the distance increases danger.

- Don't try to reason with them in person. Keep a barrier between you and the intruder (a locked door, a closed gate, a fence line).
- Use your voice from a safe position. If you want them to know they've been seen, yell from an upstairs window, verandah, or well-lit doorway:
"Police have been called, they're on their way!"
- Stay visible, not vulnerable. Position yourself where you can be seen (and can see) but can quickly retreat if needed.

4. Special Tips for Women Living Alone

Create a "safe call" system.

- Have a neighbour or friend on speed dial who knows your location and can get to you fast.
- Keep your phone on you. Even when you're in the paddock or garden.
- Rehearse your plan. Know where you'll go, what you'll grab, and what you'll say. Practice means you'll react faster under pressure.

5. When You're Part of the Family Farm

Agree on roles in advance.

- If your partner investigates, your job might be to get the kids safe and call the police.
- Share awareness. Make sure everyone knows where the safe exits are, how to lock sheds, and how to reach emergency services.
- Don't be afraid to override bravado. If something feels off or unsafe, insist on calling the Police before anyone heads out.

Bottomline: You're not "giving in" by avoiding confrontation. You're choosing to live to fight another day. Your safety matters more than catching someone in the act. The best weapon you have is your brain, backed up by a good plan, good neighbours, and the tech to alert you before trouble reaches your door.

Thank you for reading our Ultimate Guide to Rural Security!

If you subscribe to our blog via our FarmAlert web page we will occasionally send you more free information on topics like:

- New products & technology
- Changes to your risk
- Updates on the law
- Competitions
- Customer Stories
- Insurance advice

Before you go, make sure you use the Score Card below to assess your own situation.

Your Ultimate Rural Security Scorecard

Consider each checklist item.

Scoring Guide

- **0–2** → Needs urgent attention (high vulnerability)
- **3–4** → Adequate but can improve
- **5** → Strong protection in this area

| # | Checklist Item | Description | Score (0–5) | Notes |
|---|------------------------------------|---|-------------|-------|
| 1 | Perimeter Security | Boundary fencing or hedging in good repair, no gaps, and able to deter intruders. | | |
| 2 | Driveway & Gate Control | Gates are strong, lockable, and positioned to slow vehicle access. | | |
| 3 | Lighting Coverage | Adequate motion-sensor or dusk-to-dawn lighting at entries, sheds, and yards. | | |
| 4 | Surveillance Cameras | Cameras positioned to capture vehicle plates and activity around key assets. | | |

| | | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|---|--|--|
| 5 | Alarm Systems | Audible alarms in vulnerable areas with alerts connected to your phone. | | |
| 6 | Asset & Tool Security | Lockable sheds, secured tools, and immobilisers on vehicles/machinery. Fuel tanks locked. | | |
| 7 | Livestock Protection | Secure stock yards, clear identification (tags/brands), and regular head counts. | | |
| 8 | Community Network | Active membership in a rural watch or neighbour alert group / CrimeAlert. | | |
| 9 | Signage & Deterrents | Clear signs warning of CCTV, alarms, or restricted access. | | |
| 10 | Incident Response Plan | A written plan for security incidents, including contact numbers and actions. | | |
| 11 | Technology Security | Secure Wi-Fi, strong passwords, and protected remote camera access. | | |
| 12 | Seasonal Checks | Security review after seasonal changes, storms, or major events. | | |

| Total Score | Readiness Level | Vulnerability Mark |
|--------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 0–20 | Low Readiness | Very High Risk |
| 21–35 | Moderate | Medium Risk |
| 36–50 | High | Low Risk |
| 51–60 | Excellent | Minimal Risk |