



Animal(s) found wandering on the road Quick Guide

An overview of key issues when an animal wanders onto the road.

For advice about other matters, e.g. animal welfare, disease control, etc., see the 'further information' section.

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The Animals (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 (Article 10)

The 1976 Order specifies that the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) is responsible for livestock found wandering on a public road.

“Livestock” includes cattle, horses, donkeys, sheep, pigs, goats, poultry, and domesticated deer.

What to do if animals are seen wandering on the road

Anyone who finds any of these animals on a public road should contact the PSNI.

Role of the PSNI

When the PSNI receive a report of an animal wandering on the road and its owner is not known, they may impound the animal with their service provider whilst they attempt to trace the owner.

Any individual who looks after the animal whilst the PSNI attempt to find the owner is entitled to seek payment to cover keeping and feeding the animal until that owner is located.

The PSNI will place a notice describing the animal and where it was found outside the nearest Police Station for 14 days. This gives the owner 14 days to come forward and claim the animal.

Owner found within 14 days

If, within the 14 days, the owner has been found he/she is entitled to receive the animal back by paying to the PSNI the costs incurred for keeping and feeding the animal and for any expenses incurred. If the owner refuses or fails to pay, the animal will be sold.

Owner not found within 14 days

If, after 14 days, no owner has been found the PSNI can authorise the animal to be sold at market or by auction. The PSNI will give the public 48 hours' notice of this sale by posting a notice outside the police station and also outside of the place of sale. The notice will include details of the sale, a description of the animal and details of where it was found.

Following the sale, the PSNI, will pay the expenses of the sale (if any) out of the proceeds and will pay to the person who kept the animal an agreed amount for keeping and feeding it.

Owner found within 6 months of sale of livestock

If the owner is found within 6 months of the sale, the balance of the proceeds of the sale will be paid to him/her.

The Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 (Article 93)

The 1993 Order makes provision for animals on a road.

It is an offence to turn loose onto a road: any horse, donkey, cattle, sheep, goat, pig or any domesticated deer.

Any owner or keeper of such an animal found wandering on a road, or lying at the side of the road, is guilty of an offence.

Further information:

Details of the Animals (Northern Ireland) Order 1976:
www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1976/1040/contents

Details of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993:
www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1993/3160/contents/made

Quick Guide: “Straying Animal(s) found on a person’s land”:
www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/introduction-animal-welfare

Details of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011:
www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/16/contents

Quick Guide: “Animal Welfare”:
www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/introduction-animal-welfare

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