

NFU - THINK TWICE BEFORE RELEASING CHINESE LANTERNS THIS SUMMER

As the summer party season gets into full swing the NFU is urging people to think twice before buying and releasing flying sky lanterns.

The NFU has already called for a ban on Chinese lanterns which pose a risk to farm animals, wildlife and to property.

NFU South East spokeswoman Isobel Bretherton says: "We are urging people to think twice before buying these flying lanterns and releasing them, attractive as they are. Unfortunately, all too often Chinese lanterns land on farmland. Their fine metal wire frames do not biodegrade and they can cause immense suffering to animals."

She explains: "The wire can be accidentally eaten by animals, cattle in particular, and can cause an agonising, slow death. Farm animals, wildlife and pets face terrible injuries if they become entangled in this wire. In addition, the NFU is concerned that lanterns pose a fire risk - they have landed while still alight in fields of growing crops."

The NFU's ruling body, NFU Council, last month called for a ban on Chinese lanterns. The NFU has received numerous reports of harm to livestock, and in some instances death, caused by cattle ingesting wire from lantern frames. They can also be chopped up during silage and hay-making, being eaten by animals at a later date, with disastrous results. The wire can get tangled around an animal's feet or become embedded in its skin. Members of NFU Council were also concerned that combine harvesters could be damaged if they picked up lanterns while harvesting.

The NFU had previously called for a voluntary ban on lanterns that use wire in their construction. However, Council members agreed the NFU should lobby the Government for a complete ban – as seen in Germany and Australia – after they reviewed evidence of the impacts of Chinese lanterns and manufacturers' moves to date. The NFU will enter into discussions with the Environment Agency about the lanterns' status as trade waste in an effort to reduce the release of lanterns by hotels and wedding venues.