

## **LIVESTOCK THEFT PREVENTION TIPS**

There are several factors contributing to an active environment for livestock theft in Botswana:

- Readily available market for stolen stock.
- Limited number of abattoirs.
- Unregulated earmarks and brands for small stock.
- Failure to exercise care on the part of farmers.

The Stock Theft Act's inadequacy in dealing with possession of stolen stock or produce has resulted in many acquittals. The information here is intended to raise awareness amongst farmers and the wider community on issues relating to the prevention and protection of stock from thieves.

### **Methods Used By Stock Thieves:**

- The majority of stock stolen for rearing purposes is calves. Criminals target calves which are not yet branded and marked. These unmarked offspring are taken and hidden in secret kraals which are erected in bushy areas. Ultimately, the stolen stock is branded and ear marked by criminals. Some criminals keep matimela (stray animals) in their kraals and then brand and mark their offspring. In most cases they end up killing the parent to the offspring (cow) to destroy evidence.
- Small stock such as goats and sheep are usually monitored by syndicates while inside kraals and then stolen during the absence of a guardian or at night and loaded in vehicles and sold to butcheries, meat markets or to individuals for rearing.
- Cattle are often slaughtered in the bush or in abandoned farms at night, where the heads and skins are disposed of. The carcass is then transported to butcheries and other meat outlets.
- Cross border stock theft usually involves organized international stock theft syndicates who take advantage of porous borders and livestock left unattended grazing along the border. The stolen livestock is driven across the border to readily available.
- Hired herders who are not properly remunerated sometimes slaughter livestock for domestic consumption and then claim that the livestock went missing or died from diseases or wild animal attacks. They usually steal employer's stock from their surrounding area.
- Sometimes criminals deface the original brand mark of the owner and then brand the animals with their own brand.
- Cows, followed by goats, are the most commonly stolen livestock.

### **Common perpetrators:**

- Perpetrators of stock theft are often herder staff who will provide little information about their background, butchery owners, and organized stock theft syndicates involving government officials, some farmers, stock traders and business owners.
- Foreigners sometimes collude with locals to steal and drive livestock across the border.

## **Initiatives used to combat stock theft:**

- Anti-Stock Theft Committees: Through these committees the police can easily share information on livestock theft trends, prevention techniques and other useful information.
- Community policing: This process calls for partnerships in addressing the root causes of community problems. The approach entails community and stakeholder mobilization to actively participate in decision making. This includes “Cluster Policing” which provide for the formation of anti – stock theft farmers committees which encourages the formulation of anti-stock theft strategies and task forces at cattle posts and farms aimed at addressing the issue.
- Initiatives Introduced by Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food Security include the following:
  - Zonal Branding-used to identify animals in a given area and enable monitoring of animal movements.
  - Cattle brands that identify that the animal is the property of the person whose name appears on the brand.
  - Electronic Ear tags which uses Botswana Animal Identification and Trace-back System (BAITS) - which are inserted on both ears– Electronic ear tags contains specifics on the animal and the owner. It is critical for livestock identification in case of ownership disputes.
  - Livestock Sales Permit Process - This process ensures a regulated sale of livestock to butcheries and BMC, and council abattoirs-where animals are inspected before they could be slaughtered for local butcheries.

## **Tips for preventing stock theft**

### **Butchery Owners:**

- Ensure that the right procedures are followed when acquiring livestock and livestock produce.
- Support anti-stock theft procedures.
- Inform the police regarding unscrupulous suppliers of livestock or livestock produce.
- Report corrupt officials or officers involved in stock theft to police services.
- Slaughter livestock in council or registered abattoirs not in the bushy.

### **Farmers**

- Brand and ear mark livestock in time or as early as possible.
- Keep an updated record of your livestock inventory. This will help to identify them without difficulty.
- Employ herders with clear identification and pay them adequately and promptly.
- Exercise duty of care. Visit your farm or cattle post regularly to acquaint yourself with all livestock matters.
- Report matimela to relevant authorities in a timely manner.
- Actively participate in farmer’s committees and other crime prevention initiatives.

- Avoid out of court settlement agreements with stock thieves as it in turn encourages re-offending.
- Maintain good relations with your neighbours, for them to watch over your farm when you are away. Provide them with your contact information in case of emergencies.
- Keep fences and gates in good condition.
- Send only trusted individuals to sell livestock on your behalf. Follow up to assess the accuracy of what they have told you.
- Report all incidents of livestock crime to the police as soon as possible to enable the police to investigate the cases before quality evidence is destroyed.
- Utilize Botswana Animal Identification and Trace-back System (BAITS) fully. Make sure all your cattle have electronic eartags and keep it up to date.

#### Community Members

- Report incidents of stock theft to the police immediately before evidence is destroyed.
- Inform the police about any suspicious conduct relating to stock theft.
- Actively Participate in anti-stock theft initiatives.
- Report corrupt official or officials involved in stock theft syndicates.

Note: There are currently more than 150 anti-stock theft committees nationwide. To join any of these committees or form new ones, people are advised to contact any nearest police station .

#### **For More Information:**

For more information, please contact the following office:

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Opening Hours: 07:30 to 12:45 and 13:45 to 16:30, Monday to Friday, except public holidays.

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