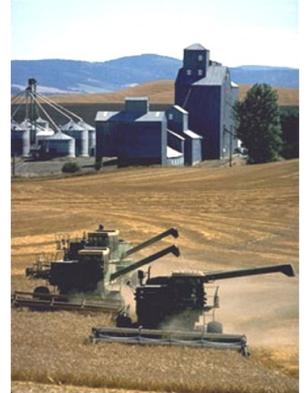


Rural Crime Prevention

Reporting Crimes to the Police

One of the biggest obstacles police face in dealing with crime on farms is the lack of reporting of crimes by farmers. If the police do not hear about a crime, there is little they can do. If people do not report crimes, offenders will get away with whatever they have done and will be encouraged to do it again. It is true police are busy, but they are never too busy to deal with a crime no matter how trivial you think it is. Often police will find incidences of petty crime in a particular area can present a pattern, and they then can develop a plan to deal with it.



Why People don't Report Crimes

There are many reasons why people do not report crimes, these are just a few:

1. Lack of Proof

It can be difficult to prove what, and how much, livestock, crops, fuel, or timber have been stolen.

You still need to report crimes. Even if you believe it will be impossible to prove, the police would prefer to know about the crime. Try to gather as much recent information as you can regarding the stolen equipment, livestock or fuel or whatever is missing.

The police have stressed that it is vital that farmers keep farm records up to date and ensure all livestock and other farm products are identified. All tools and machinery need to be engraved with some identification and their serial numbers and details need to be recorded.

2. Sometimes it is difficult to tell if a crime has occurred

With small livestock losses, there are always doubts about whether stock have merely strayed or have died from natural causes. *'Did we really use all that fuel this week?'*

You still need to report crimes. It is so important to ensure your farm records are current and updated, livestock records in particular.

Keep accurate records of all livestock bought and sold from your property, record all births and deaths of livestock. Record all details of identification numbers. Take photographs or videos of particularly valuable animals.

Keep track of fuel purchases. Dip your tanks daily and monitor your fuel usage so you will know if there is an unexplained loss of fuel. Install a flow meter to supervise fuel use. Keep a book at the tank for each user to record fuel usage by various vehicles and machinery.

3. Time Lag

Livestock can be stolen, transported, and disposed of long before the theft is discovered. Producer can be unaware of the losses until herds are gathered and counted, which may be as infrequent as once a year. Unless livestock is stolen in large numbers, farmers may accept those losses as inevitable and not report them.

You do need to report crimes. It is important to report the theft as soon as possible. However, even if some time has passed, the police would still like to know about the theft in case there is a pattern of theft in your county.

4. Why bother?

Many farmers believe police are unable to catch offenders or recover stolen property and therefore it is waste of time reporting crimes.

You need to report crimes. The police cannot solve crimes they do not know about. If people do not report crimes, the offenders will be rewarded by getting away with whatever they have done and will be encouraged to do it again.

5. The police don't understand

Some farmers think it a waste of time reporting crimes because the police (especially those from the city) have little knowledge or understanding of agricultural industries.

It is important to report crimes. The police are addressing this problem by providing training for officers in rural areas to better equip them for investigating these types of crimes. However, it is a lot to ask for officers to be knowledgeable in all breeds of livestock and the various agricultural industries. *Therefore, when reporting a crime, it is in your best interest to ensure the officer understands all the information you provide.*

Reporting a crime to the police

If you are a victim of a crime, your actions following the discovery of the crime can have considerable impact on the success of the subsequent investigation by the police.

Upon discovery:

- It is important you report the crime to the police as soon as possible. Put together as much information as you can to give to the police; descriptions of equipment, vehicle, or machinery stolen; serial and chassis numbers; where the items were last located etc. Note any evidence at the scene, eg damage to padlocks or fences.
- When reporting the crime to the police accurately answer any questions asked and listen to instructions that are given.
- Do not disturb or allow anyone else to disturb anything in and around the area involved until after the police arrive on scene.
- Try to recall any information that might be of use to the officers in regard to suspicious people or vehicles.

When reporting thefts of livestock:

- Provide type of identification and the identification numbers
- Where the livestock was located
- When you last checked on the livestock, and
- Any other relevant information

When the officers arrive:

- Cooperate fully by following their instructions
- Provide all information possible about items or livestock taken.
- Try to recall where items or livestock were purchased and provide descriptive information.
- If you recall additional information after the officers have gone, contact their office immediately.
- Review with the officers what could have been done to prevent the crime. Implement measures and suggestions from the officers to prevent it from happening again.

Other means of reporting crimes

CrimeStoppers is one way you can report crimes anonymously. The incidents are investigated by local police and the information is shared statewide. After you report a crime over the telephone to CrimeStoppers you are provided a reference number. It is important to keep that number.

If you are reporting a crime in progress, dial 911. Stay on the line and follow the instructions from the 911 operator.

**For More Information:
Contact your local Sheriffs Department
or,
Washington State Department of Agriculture
(360) 902 - 1800**



AGR PUB 555-243 (N/12/08)

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