

Livestock Theft: Tips to Prevention



Having livestock stolen isn't just taking any piece of property, it's taking away someone's livelihood. Horses and cattle are prime targets for livestock theft, especially given the ordinarily remote locations for pasture. The animals are often sold through online auctions or classified ads. Stolen cows may also be used for breeding or for their meat.

There are many farm watchdog groups that have formed in key agriculture states. Farmers and ranchers in Texas, Utah, Colorado, Iowa, California and Ohio to name a few. Some are come out of the challenge of fighting such crime in remote areas. Social media presence has helped with these groups being active on Facebook and posting thefts and suspicious activity in their area.

What can you do? The following are highly recommended tips to control livestock theft.

Identify your livestock

- Register and/or record your livestock brand
- Permanently mark all livestock using and of the following methods:
 - Branding
 - Tattooing
 - Ear tags/marks
 - Microchips
- Document and photograph an unique scars or markings on the animal
- Keep registration papers, bills of sale, and photos organized and in a secure location
- Join and participate in local farm crime watch groups

Change up your livestock operations

- Don't follow the same pattern or schedule when feeding livestock, be unpredictable
- Maintain fences, make repairs as soon as possible and use locks
- Count your livestock regularly
- Be on the lookout for suspicious tire tracks, foot prints and cigarette butts on the property
- Don't leave halters or lead ropes on gates or anywhere in the open that may help the thief
- Install an alarm system with cameras
- Don't leave keys in the equipment or out in the open
- Maintain a watch group with neighbors you trust
- Engrave saddles with your name and phone number
- Add you name, decals or logo onto your trailers so they stand out
- Use hitch locks and consider using GPS tracking systems
- When parking your trailer in a remote or wooded location, back it against a large tree or object to deter thieves from gaining access to trailer doors
- Keep your local law enforcement telephone numbers handy and notify them of any suspicious activity

More than a dozen farm-watch groups have formed over the past 10 years in California, the nation's biggest agriculture state. Farmers and ranchers in other states including Utah, Colorado, Iowa and Ohio also have started such programs. For example, to curb theft, the Texas & Southwest Cattle Raisers Association started Operation Cow Thief. This anti-theft initiative offers cash rewards for information leading to the recovery of animals or persons responsible for livestock theft.

Many states have similar programs offered through associations or an anonymous livestock theft hotline to notify authorities.

Learn more here about reporting and controlling livestock theft by contacting State Auto Risk Engineering at AskRiskEngineering@StateAuto.com or Call 1-800-444-9950 (ext. 5830)

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