



Western Sheep & Beef Producers

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Bulletin – 3 July 2014

LIVESTOCK THEFT

There has been little research into rural crime and those studies that have been published are now over 10 years old. What they do say is that in 2001 – 02, the most common type of crime was livestock theft, experienced by six per cent of all Australian farms. The cost to the industry was estimated to be \$72 million at that time. Theft increases when the value of livestock increases.

The current situation in WA is that there has been no specialist stock squad since early 2008.

The only similar squad is the Gold Stealing Detection Unit which is fully funded by the WA gold industry.

This only continues because the squad has a long previous history and is supported by an industry that makes a substantial direct contribution to the state's finances. The Dept. of Mines & Petroleum estimate that in 2010 – 11 the WA gold industry directly paid royalties to the government of \$197 million.

However, the Western Australian Police Service (WAPOL) do have a position of Regional Crime Co-ordinator to sit over the top of the seven country police districts.

WAPOL says that the majority of livestock thefts reports come from the Great Southern and relate to sheep. Sheep are easy to capture, handle, load and transport. Reports do include some unexplained loss but if there is too much, it must be livestock theft.

Across all police jurisdictions, livestock theft is usually reported between 2 weeks and 4 to 5 months afterwards.

WAPOL advise that farmers should carry out a hard and fast livestock count at each management process, such as shearing, lambing and crutching. This way they can keep track of numbers and losses.

According to WAPOL, theft in the pastoral areas has decreased from 2009 until 2012, both in the number of offences and in value. These figures include those few cattle taken as 'killers'.

Under the Criminal Code, proof of ownership relies on an accepted identifier. Stock owners should take the first available opportunity to identify their stock. In the opinion of both WAPOL and the PGA, ear marking is the only permanent identifier. Rumen boluses are perfectly legal in WA but problems with their use have arisen in QLD abattoirs.

Police services report that stock theft conviction is the hardest conviction of all to get, based on charges laid and convictions recorded.

To substantiate an allegation of stock theft, WAPOL need to:

- Be able to rely on the accuracy of mustering / management records to establish the number of livestock allegedly stolen,
- Eliminate natural events like wandering, perishing or misplaced livestock,
- Rely on the accuracy of industry records like waybills, NVDs and NLIS reporting.

Farmers need to consider criminal motivations;

- Motive = risk versus reward.
- Crime = motive + means (ability) + opportunity.

Farmers should consider using security video cameras such as the "Uway NT 50 B Black Flash", which takes night video and images. The cost is \$485.

There is no need to announce their presence unless it is a public place. Suggested locations include gates and bends in roads where vehicles have to slow down. This reduces dust obscuring the images.

UPCOMING MEETINGS – 2014

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Executive Committee – 31 July Sheep Easy 2014 Field Day at Wickepin – 6 August PGA Convention – 15 August