



LIVESTOCK

Rustling On The Rise

Thefts Cost Ranchers Millions Amid Poor Economy

BY JIM SUHR
AP Business Writer

ST. LOUIS — Even with cattle theft rampant in much of the nation's midsection, Oklahoma rancher Ryan Payne wasn't worried about anyone messing with his cows and calves. By his estimation, his pasture is so far off the beaten path "you need a helicopter to see it."

That changed last month when Payne, 37, checked on his livestock and found a ghoulish scene: Piles of entrails from two Black Angus calves he says thieves gutted "like they were deer." They made off with the meat and another 400-pound calf in a heist he estimated cost him \$1,800.

"Gosh, times are tough, and maybe people are truly starving and just need the meat," he said. "But it's shocking. I can't believe people can stoop that low."

While the brazenness may be unusual, the theft isn't. High beef prices have made cattle attractive as a quick score for people struggling in the sluggish economy, and other livestock are being taken too. Six thousand lambs were stolen from a feedlot in Texas, and nearly 1,000 hogs have been stolen in recent weeks from farms in Iowa and Minnesota. The thefts add up to millions of dollars in losses for U.S. ranches.

Authorities say today's thieves are sophisticated compared to the horseback bandits of the rugged Old West. They pull up livestock trailers in the middle of the night and know how to coax the animals inside. Investigators suspect it's then a quick trip across state lines to sell the animals at auction barns.

"It almost has to be someone

who knows about the business, including just knowing where to take the cattle," said Carmen Fenton, a spokeswoman for the 15,000-member Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, formed in the 1870s specifically to combat cattle rustlers. "It's crazy to think we're still in business."

There's no clearinghouse that tracks thefts nationally, but statistics among certain states are staggering. In Texas — the nation's biggest cattle producer — and to a lesser extent Oklahoma, some 4,500 cattle have been reported missing or stolen this year, according to Fenton's group. The association's special rangers managed to recover or account for \$4.8 million in stolen ranch property each of the previous two years, most of it steers, bulls, cows and calves.

Such thefts also are happening in places once spared. In southwestern Missouri's Jasper County, not far from a regional stockyard, about 100 of the nearly 180 head of cattle stolen this year were snatched during a recent six-week stretch, sheriff's Lt. Ron Thomas said.

"Occasionally one or two have gotten stolen (over the years), but not this many in such a short time. They've gotten us big time," he said, figuring the stolen livestock have been whisked off to another state. "These guys are not your typical fly-by-night, let's-steal-a-cow kinda people. They know exactly what they're doing. They're pretty slick, and they're bold."

Investigators have found clues to be elusive, partly because thieves often artfully conceal their crimes by replacing pasture fences they've cut to get to the animals, Thomas said. Ranchers unaccustomed to counting their

cattle each day may not realize any are missing for a week or more, and by then, any tire tracks or other evidence — perhaps even DNA or fingerprints from a soda or beer can discarded by the bandit — may be gone.

The other problem is that while brands are widely used in the West, three states hard hit by livestock thefts — Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas — don't require them. That's hampered investigators' efforts to match recovered cattle to owners or to relay to stockyards markings to watch for when strangers haul in livestock to be sold.

Without brands, "ranchers could tell me their missing cow is brown and white, but goodness gracious, go down the road and you'll see thousands," Thomas said.

While a voluntary national livestock identification system exists, few ranchers and farmers participate in it.

"Unfortunately, cattle don't have a serial number that goes with them or some type of permanent ID" short of branding, said Jim Fraley, an Illinois Farm Bureau livestock specialist. "Thieves look at it as an opportunity and can market the cattle under their name. It's a fairly easy thing to do." Owners' vigilance has paid off in some cases. A Colorado rancher who was hunting prairie dogs spotted one of his branded, missing cows on another man's property. Deputies swooped in and found 36 cows and 31 calves worth \$68,000 and belonging to nine different people.

An Alabama rancher reported a couple of his cattle missing, and then two more were stolen the next night, Chilton County Sheriff

Kevin Davis said. Sheriff's investigators installed cameras on the property but got nothing before pulling them days later.

Not long after, the farmer called because he spotted two men with a pickup truck and what turned out to be a stolen trailer on his land. Deputies arrested the men and found five of the six missing cows — half of them pregnant — at various locations. The sixth animal already had been slaughtered.

Davis credited luck and the rancher's "heightened alert" for snaring the two suspects.

"The boldness is the thing — for them to come back three different times to the same pasture," he said. "Obviously, they didn't feel very threatened about being caught. But I've never given criminals credit for having high intelligence."

And they're not finicky. An Ohio woman has been charged with taking \$110,000 worth of frozen bull semen — which can valuable to breeders in even small amounts — from a liquid-nitrogen tank at a Moorefield Township genetics company where she once worked.

Nor are all the thefts big. Someone recently made off with two horses — ages 16 and 7 — from a home near Hanover in northeastern Illinois' Jo Daviess County.

Back in Oklahoma, Payne replaced old wire gates on his ranch near Chelsea, with "big, old heavy-duty steel ones," hoping to safeguard his other cows.

"That's about all I can do," he said. "Like everyone says, it never happens to me. I guess that's wrong."

SDSU iGrow Expands Its Services With iGrow Wheat

BROOKINGS — South Dakota State University Extension's iGrow is expanding its online services to include iGrow Wheat.

"Just like iGrow Corn provides South Dakota corn growers with time sensitive information and resources, iGrow Wheat will do the same for wheat growers," said Rosie Nold, Extension program director for Agriculture and Natural Resources.

iGrow is the teaching platform used by SDSU Extension to assure state of the art program delivery. It allows individual users to access Extension information and resources 24-7.

"iGrow connects farmers with the latest information and resources from University and Extension field specialists," said Nold of the information that is frequently updated.

On iGrow Wheat, growers have access to current production information from fall planting issues, fall fertility tips, disease and weed control recommendations and planning tips for spring planting.

In addition to agronomic information, iGrow is a free service that gives producers all the information they need to monitor current de-

velopments in agriculture, research and trade; farm-specific agricultural weather; profitability calculators; and libraries of agricultural production and management information, podcasts and forums, all in a highly secure on-line environment that works on all computers, smart phones and mobile internet devices.

The iGrow effort is a continuation of SDSU Extension's long-standing mission to help citizens convert data to knowledge. We live in an era of massive information overload. iGrow brings together in one easy-to-use portal all of the agricultural production information that producers need to make profit-oriented decisions.

To assure the quality and accuracy of the information, SDSU Extension invests 20 percent of its staff time in the ongoing development of iGrow information.

The iGrow model assures that SDSU Extension will be the indispensable outreach link of South Dakota's land grant university.

To see how iGrow can work for you visit, www.igrow.org, and to view this electronically visit www.iGrow.org.

Results Of 2011 Soybean Trials Available

BROOKINGS — Results are now available from South Dakota State University's 2011 Soybean Variety Performance Trials.

Each year SDSU invites seed companies throughout the Upper Midwest to participate in soybean trials hosted in six research test plots across South Dakota. Data from the 2011 plots was collected this harvest and preliminary information is available to growers at www.iGrow.org.

"This data is a valuable tool for growers to use when selecting seed for 2012," said Bob Hall, SDSU Extension Agronomist.

This year trials focused on Ma-

turity Group(MG) 0, MG 1 and MG 2. The MG 0 and MG 1 trials were planted in Warner, South Shore, Bancroft and Brookings. MG 1 and MG 2 trials were planted in Bancroft, Brookings, Geddes and Beresford. Data from the trials focuses on yield, plot lodging scores, as well as protein and oil content. About 25 seed companies participated in the trials.

To view results, visit www.igrow.org, select Corn from the Agronomy drop down menu, on the right hand side of the page under "Resource Library" click "Links" and view "Soybean Variety Performance Trials."

OLYMPIC/EDUCATION TOUR

July 16-August 1, 2012

Once in a Lifetime Trip!
Summer 2012 Olympics in London
\$5,000 approx.

Visit
Ireland &
England

Group is SD teachers & students on EF Tours. Looking for a few more adults or students to make group complete.

If interested, please contact Lenni, Vermillion teacher, at 605-670-2717

YANKTON MONUMENT CO.

Family Memorials
by Gibson

AMBER WESTERGAARD

325 DOUGLAS AVENUE, YANKTON, SD 57078
OFFICE (605) 664-0980 • 1-800-658-2294
Cell (605) 610-6992 • www.gibsonmonuments.com

YHS BAND & COLOR GUARD
presents

15th Annual BAND AID
Indoor Marching Show

Friday
November 4, 2011
7:00 p.m.
YHS Gym

Special Guests:
YMS Band
USD Drumline & Percussion Ensemble

TICKETS AVAILABLE November 4th
at the YHS Gym Door & through
Band or Color Guard Students

\$5.00
Adults & Students (K-12)
FREE for Preschool & under

Thank you to the following businesses that have donated prizes for our raffle.

Washington Pavilion	Sweet T's	JJ Benji's
Wild Water West	Sioux Falls Storm	Minnesota Vikings
Yankton Motor Company	Rita's Purse-O-Nalities	Buhl's Cleaners
Graham Tire	1st National Bank South Dakota	Sertoma Butterfly House
Burger King	Minerva's	Avera Sacred Heart Hospital
McDonalds	Lisa's Fashions	Slumberland Furniture
Dairy Queen	Summit Center	LilyCrest Cottage
Subway	Country Cupboard	Payless Shoes
Sioux Falls Stampede	NFAA	1st Dakota National Bank
Dakota Archery	Holly Rowland	Future Look Salon
Photography by Jerry & Associates	Muggsy's	Jake Hoffner
J.C. Penney	Molletmusic.com	Countryside Manufacturing
Applied Engineering	El Tapatio	Avera Wellness Center
Pizza Ranch	Ray's Midbell Music	Best Western/Kelly Inn
Profile Salon	Yesterday's Cafe'	Tropical Creations
Scheels	Luken Memorial	Joyce Mitchell
Dakota Theatre	First Fitness	Doug & Karen Ekeren
Great Bear Recreation	Hatch Furniture	Posters donated by
	Pied Piper	Boller Printing
	Royal Sport Shop	

The University of South Dakota
Assuring Greater Access to the Master of Professional Accountancy Program —
Now Online

Employment projections confirm the demand for accountants and auditors remains strong – 18.2% increase expected through 2018.*

Our thirty credit hour degree can be completed in as little as two years through part time study.

*U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

For more information, visit www.usd.edu/cde/mpa.cfm.

Apply today at
www.usd.edu/grad/how-to-apply.cfm.

Courses begin in January.

UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH DAKOTA

For more information contact:
CONTINUING & DISTANCE EDUCATION
414 E. Clark St. • Vermillion, SD 57069
605-677-6240 • 800-233-7937
www.usd.edu/cde