

Barbaric stock theft on the increase

A farmer from Steynsrus, Nico Mienie, was victim to cruel stock theft for the second time in a month. He lost 36 pregnant ewes valued R70,000 at the hands of stock thieves last month. More recently, he lost 23 ewes and 23 lambs which were either slaughtered or just killed. The 23 lambs were all stabbed in the eye to kill them. Only eight carcasses out of 23 killed ewes are missing, with the rest slaughtered or throats slit and left on scene.



Nekie Grobler, safety coordinator in the district, says they cannot grasp why the animals had to be destroyed and the lambs killed if the suspects were only going to take eight ewes and leave the rest behind. The damages to Mienie after the incident is at least R57,500. According to Grobler, stock theft is on the increase in the area.

Dirk Viljoen, Free State Agriculture's (FSA) safety representative in the eastern Free State, says 35 sheep were stolen from a farmer in the Clarens district over the weekend. The FSA and VKB Safety Desk noted with appreciation the Police's willingness to provide air support to search for the sheep and suspects, but due to bad weather conditions the helicopter could not take off. Misty weather also inhibited the search for suspects in the mountainous terrain, but the police were on the scene yesterday and they are on the scene again today to search for suspects.

Police needs more resources

Tommie Esterhuyse, chairperson of the FSA's Law and Order Committee, says stock theft incidents, where large totals of animals are stolen, is on the increase in the province. "The police will definitely have to make more detectives available if things continue as they do now and they also have to approach this as organised crime." Shortages of personnel, as well as vehicles for the police, remains a problem.

The emotion and anger with which farmers react on these stock theft incidents on defenseless animals have reached a breaking point, and much of it stems from a place of love for their animals, says Henk Vermeulen, chief executive officer of FSA. He says FSA has provided photos of the most recent incident with the hope that society will realize the barbaric way used during stock theft regularly. We want the public to understand the anger of farmers when they come across such scenes, and request them to assist farmers by not buying meat from meat providers where the source of the meat is not clear.

"Although farmers are law abiding citizens, the safety of these criminals when they are caught red-handed cannot be ensured," says Vermeulen. Such crimes do not just influence the animals and those who find the scene, but it also impacts the future of the farmer and his workers. FSA also requests the police to attend to the gaps that exist, and to ensure that those who are caught for these crimes receive heavy sentences.

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