

# **Property Crime Victimisation and Crime Prevention on Farms**

***Report to the New South Wales Attorney General's  
Crime Prevention Division***

**By**

**Elaine Barclay,  
Institute for Rural Futures, University of New England,  
Armidale, New South Wales**

**Joseph F. Donnermeyer,  
Department of Human and Community Resource Development,  
The Ohio State University,  
Columbus, Ohio,  
and**

**Brendan P. Doyle and Dominic Talary,  
Institute for Rural Futures, University of New England,  
Armidale, New South Wales.**

**THE INSTITUTE FOR RURAL FUTURES  
INCORPORATING THE FORMER RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
CENTRE  
University of New England  
Armidale, NSW 2351**

**2001**

**The Institute for Rural Futures, 2001**

Property crime victimisation and crime prevention on farms:  
report to the New South Wales Attorney General's Crime  
Prevention Division.

Bibliography.  
Includes index.  
ISBN 1 86389 776 3.

1. Rural crimes - New South Wales. 2. Farmers - Crimes  
against - New South Wales. 3. Crime prevention - New South  
Wales. I. Barclay, Elaine. II. New South Wales. Attorney  
General's Dept. Crime Prevention Division. III. University  
of New England. Institute for Rural Futures.

364.08863

---

**IRF Publication No. 00-2**

## **Acknowledgments**

The research that forms the subject of this report has been supported by a grant from the New South Wales Attorney General's Crime Prevention Division. The views expressed are the responsibility of the authors and are not necessarily those of the funding body.

Our sincere appreciation goes to Mr John Warre, Mr Bernie O'Sullivan and Mr Joe Lane of the New South Wales Farmers Association for their support on the original submission for funding, for their advice on the survey design and for a review of this draft. We are particularly grateful Superintendent Stephen Bradshaw of New South Wales Police for his support and guidance throughout this project. Other officers who have also guided this research include Detective Sergeant Peter Nunn, coordinator of Operation Nicaragua, Inspector Peter Torning, and Detective Sergeants Bob Drew and John Peters of Armidale Local Area Command.

Our special thanks goes to all those farmers for their participation in the mail survey and the interviews we conducted. Thank you also to those police officers, magistrates, stock and station agents and other industry personnel who also participated in interviews.

We would like to thank our colleagues at the Institute for Rural Futures for their advice on drafts of this report. Special thanks to Jean Harris for her assistance in the preparation of this report.

All errors and omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

# **Contents**

Acknowledgments .....	(i)
-----------------------	-----

## **CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Summary of Research Priorities .....	2
1.3 Structure of the Report.....	3

## **CHAPTER TWO – BACKGROUND**

2.1 Introduction.....	5
2.2 Agriculture in Australia .....	5
2.2.1 The cropping industry .....	5
2.2.2 Horticulture .....	6
2.2.3 Livestock industry.....	7
2.3 Property Crimes on Farms.....	9
2.3.1 Theft.....	10
2.3.2 Other types of crime .....	12
2.4 Agricultural Crime Statistics .....	14
2.4.1 Official recorded crime data .....	14
2.5 Factors Affecting the Policing of Agricultural Crime.....	15
2.5.1 Policing crime within the livestock industry .....	16
2.6 Legislation .....	17
2.7 Summary .....	20

## **CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL CRIME**

3.1 Introduction.....	21
3.2 History of Agricultural Crime .....	21
3.3 Current Issues in Australia.....	22
3.4 Research in Agricultural Crime .....	24
3.4.1 Australian research .....	24
3.4.2 Overseas research .....	26
3.5 Rationale for this Research.....	29
3.6 Summary .....	30

## **CHAPTER FOUR – METHODOLOGY**

4.1 Introduction.....	31
4.2 The Mail Survey .....	31
4.3 The Analysis.....	32
4.3.1 Unit of analysis.....	32
4.3.2 Statistical analyses.....	34
4.4 The Interviews .....	34
4.4.1 Interviews with farmers .....	34
4.4.2 Interviews with police officers .....	34
4.4.3 Interviews with various other professionals .....	35
4.5 Summary .....	35

## **CHAPTER FIVE – PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE**

5.1	Introduction.....	37
5.1.1	Farm operators.....	37
5.2	Farm Operations .....	38
5.2.1	Property size .....	38
5.2.2	Commercial agricultural production .....	39
5.2.3	Livestock .....	40
5.2.4	Cropping.....	41
5.3	Farm Ecology .....	43
5.3.1	Farm layout .....	43
5.3.2	Surveillance.....	45
5.3.3	Proximity of the property to public roads .....	46
5.3.4	Terrain.....	46
5.4	Summary .....	48

## **CHAPTER SIX – VICTIMISATION**

6.1	Introduction.....	49
6.2	Overview of Victimisation.....	49
6.2.1	Incidences of crime .....	49
6.2.2	Mapping crime.....	49
6.3	Victimisation over Lifetime and Past Two Years.....	53
6.4	Victimisation over Six Property Types .....	55
6.5	Individual Victimisation Experience.....	57
6.5.1	Livestock theft .....	57
6.5.2	Theft of tools, machinery and equipment.....	60
6.5.3	Theft of wool.....	62
6.5.4	Other theft .....	62
6.5.5	Fraud .....	62
6.5.6	Break and enter.....	63
6.5.7	Illegal trespassers and shooters .....	63
6.5.8	Discovery of drugs .....	66
6.6	Financial Losses .....	66
6.7	Reporting Crime .....	67
6.7.1	Reporting rates.....	67
6.7.2	Reasons for reporting crimes.....	68
6.7.3	Alternative means of reporting crimes .....	71
6.8	Summary .....	72

## **CHAPTER SEVEN – SECURITY ON-FARM**

7.1	Introduction.....	75
7.2	The Ecology of Agricultural Crime .....	75
7.2.1	Farm layout .....	75
7.2.2	Terrain.....	76
7.2.3	Cover.....	77
7.2.4	Distance and visibility.....	77
7.3	Security Measures Employed On-Farm.....	80
7.3.1	Use of locks.....	81
7.3.2	Other security measures .....	82
7.3.3	Livestock security.....	85
7.3.4	Insurance cover.....	88
7.3.5	Other factors that influence guardianship .....	89
7.4	Summary and Conclusions .....	90

## **CHAPTER EIGHT – ATTITUDES ABOUT AGRICULTURAL CRIME**

8.1	Introduction.....	93
8.2	Perceptions of Trends in Agricultural Crime .....	93
8.2.1	Seriousness of crime.....	93
8.2.2	Rising crime .....	94
8.2.3	Perceptions of crime in the community.....	95
8.3	Attitudes to Policing of Agricultural Crimes .....	96
8.4	Attitudes towards Safety and Security On-Farm.....	98
8.4.1	Responsibility .....	99
8.4.2	Identification .....	100
8.4.3	Sense of control over crime .....	100
8.4.4	Attitudes to illegal trespassers and shooters .....	100
8.4.5	Legislation .....	100
8.4.6	Level of concern about crime.....	101
8.4.7	Reporting livestock theft.....	102
8.4.8	Attitudes to livestock prevention initiatives .....	102
8.4.9	Travelling Stock Statements (TSS).....	102
8.4.10	National Livestock Identification Scheme .....	103
8.4.11	Police Stock Squad.....	104
8.5	Blame .....	104
8.5.1	Unemployment.....	104
8.5.2	Drug money.....	105
8.5.3	The environment .....	105
8.5.4	Outsiders .....	105
8.5.5	Locals .....	105
8.5.6	Neighbours .....	106
8.5.7	Farm employees .....	109
8.6	Reaction to Victimisation.....	111
8.7	Fear of Crime .....	112
8.8	Safe Communities.....	116
8.9	Summary .....	118

## **CHAPTER NINE – INTERVIEWS WITH RURAL POLICE**

9.1	Introduction.....	121
9.2	Method .....	121
9.3	The Size of the Problem.....	122
	9.3.1 Types of crime .....	122
	9.3.2 Seriousness of the problem.....	123
	9.3.3 Trends in crime .....	123
	9.3.4 Types of offenders.....	124
9.4	Farm Management Practices and Farm Crime.....	126
	9.4.1 Farm management practices .....	126
	9.4.2 Solutions to the problem .....	131
9.5	Policing Agricultural Crime.....	133
	9.5.1 Obstacles .....	133
	9.5.2 Suggestions for more organisational support.....	141
9.6	Crime Prevention Initiatives .....	143
	9.6.1 Crime prevention strategies.....	143
	9.6.2 Proactive activities .....	145
	9.6.3 Involvement in Neighbourhood Watch or Rural Watch.....	146
	9.6.4 Community action .....	147
	9.6.5 Use of police hotlines.....	147
9.7	Staff Training in Rural Crime.....	149
9.8	Conclusions.....	151

## **CHAPTER TEN – CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

10.1	Summary .....	153
10.2	Implications of the Findings .....	159
10.3	Further Research .....	162
10.4	Conclusions.....	163
10.5	Recommendations .....	164
	10.5.1 For farmers.....	164
	10.5.2 For police .....	165
	10.5.3 For governments.....	167
	<b>References .....</b>	169
	Appendix 1 .....	Appendix1.1-1.14

# **Chapter ONE**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Since early European settlement, crime has been an integral part of Australia's history and folklore. Convicts were among the earliest settlers to the new colony and played a vital role in the opening up and settlement of inland Australia. Much of our history and folklore was staged in the bush and centres on the development of a pastoral industry that was to become the economic backbone of the new nation. Life on the land was difficult in a harsh and unfamiliar environment. With light fingering being common in the pasts of many of the new settlers, thefts of sheep, cattle, and horses became endemic, highly lucrative and a shortcut to wealth. Crime in the bush became the substance of legends from the jolly swagman stuffing a jumbuck in his tucker bag to the bushranger Captain Starlight, who drove 1,000 stolen cattle from central Queensland to Adelaide over what was thought to be impassable country (McCarthy, 1987).

More than a century later, much has remained unchanged. The problem of crime on farms appears to be widespread, and can often involve serious financial and personal losses for farmers. With sheep and cattle currently fetching record prices, livestock theft is of particular concern. In 2000-2001, 2808 cattle valued at \$1,3 million and 24,195 head of sheep valued at \$922,900 were reported stolen across New South Wales. It is likely that these figures considerably underestimate the actual losses as many incidences of stock theft go unreported. Thefts have been reported from large and small operations as well as piggeries, apiaries and horse studs. Recent reports reveal that some individual producers have incurred stock losses of up to \$70,000 in a single incident of theft. Few operations can withstand such losses, particularly in the wake of several years of drought and low commodity prices. Not only do producers incur financial losses; there are the ongoing ramifications of the loss of future breeding herds and bloodlines. Of national concern, is the increased risk of stolen stock with fraudulent health status papers entering the marketing and processing chain which poses an unacceptable risk to Australia's trading regimes (NSW Farmers, 1999).

In response to these concerns, farmer organisations have held meetings across the State and called for the reinstatement of the NSW Police Stock Squad to address these issues. A ministerial rural crime working party was formed to investigate

the best approach to reduce agricultural crime. NSW Police also responded with the formation of *Operation Nicaragua* to target stock theft and other farm crime.

The exact nature and extent of agricultural crime on Australian farms is obscure. To date, studies of agricultural crime have been virtually non-existent and until recently, apart from livestock theft, agricultural crimes have not been separately recorded in official crime data. In addition, the actual extent of agricultural crime is not reflected in recorded crime data due to the fact that many incidents are not reported to police.

Therefore, in order to gain an understanding of the pervasiveness and seriousness of agricultural crime in Australia, there is a need to conduct an investigation of farmers' experiences of crime, to seek an understanding of the impact of victimisation, and the reasons why farmers report, or do not report crimes.

## **1.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH PRIORITIES**

In undertaking the present study, our goal was to address the lack of research through an investigation into the extent and impact of crimes on farms, such as the theft of stock and other farm produce, chemicals, fuel, machinery, tools and equipment, in addition to crimes of vandalism, break and enter of farm buildings, fraud, illegal trespassing and shooting, environmental crime and arson. The study also examined the relationship between victimisation and physical deterrence factors on farm. The extent and pattern of security practices undertaken by farmers and their possible association with property crime was also assessed. The main objectives of this study were to examine the type, extent and pattern of farm victimisation, including:

- the types of items or property affected by crime;
- the factors that affect the vulnerability of farms to crime;
- patterns in the occurrence of crimes by crime type (time of day; seasonal occurrences);
- the location patterns of crime on farms;
- the extent and impact of losses to farm businesses and farm families;
- the extent and types of crime prevention measures that farmers employ to reduce their victimisation; and
- the attitudes of farmers towards agricultural crime, their vulnerability to crime, whether or not they report crimes to police, who or what they blame for crime, and their opinions on policing in their district.

The study also sought information from police officers across rural New South Wales in order to understand their opinions on the extent and impact of agricultural crime. The opinions of various professionals who would also have knowledge about local crime and security issues, such as New South Wales Agriculture livestock officers, stock and station agents, representatives of farmer organisations were also sought. The findings will provide an invaluable

knowledge base for the future development of educational programs aimed at farmers on crime prevention strategies. The information will be useful for developing more effective policing strategies and will provide a foundation for the promotion of cooperative endeavours between the police and farmer organisations in Australia.

### **1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

In chapter two, an overview of agriculture in Australia is presented which highlights those issues that impact upon the commission of agricultural crime. The various types of crime experienced on farms are also defined. Chapter three reviews the literature of property crime on farms in Australia and other countries. Chapter four outlines the methodology employed in conducting this study. Chapter five provides a profile of the sample of farmers and their properties upon which the analysis of the data is based. Chapters six to eight present the results of the analysis of the survey data and the interviews with farmers. Chapter nine summarises the findings of the interviews with police officers stationed in country areas. In chapter ten, the findings of the report are summarised and the implications of these findings are discussed.



# **Chapter TWO**

## **Background**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Agricultural crime is a unique and complex phenomenon. To provide an understanding of this complexity and the context in which this crime occurs, it is necessary to appreciate the size of the industry to be policed. This chapter provides a brief overview of the agricultural industry in Australia with a specific focus on New South Wales. A description of the types of crime that can impact upon farm businesses and farm families is also presented. The chapter also summarises the legislation regarding the identification and movement of livestock, which impacts upon the policing of stolen stock.

### **2.2 AGRICULTURE IN AUSTRALIA**

The gross value of agricultural commodities produced in Australia in 1999-2000 was \$29.9 billion (ABS, 2001a). New South Wales accounted for 27% of the total value of production. This value has been relatively stable for the past five years largely due to the increased diversity in agriculture. Exports of oilseeds, cotton, wine, horticultural products, sugar, dairy, lamb and live cattle have grown over the past decade (ABS, 2001a).

The number of agricultural operations Australia-wide in 2000 was 146,400. There are 43,063 farms in New South Wales. The average sized property ranges between 100 and 499 hectares. These holdings comprise 33% of all farms in Australia and consist of beef cattle, sheep, grain and dairy operations. Farm holdings of over 2500 hectares account for 14,100 (10%) of all farms and are mostly confined to large scale grazing and cropping operations (ABS, 2001b).

#### **2.2.1 The cropping industry**

The gross value of crops for 1999-2000 was \$16.6 billion. The industry was the third largest in numbers accounting for 11% (16,500) of total farming operations. Across Australia in 1999-2000, there were 12.3 million hectares sown to wheat,

producing a record 25 million tonnes valued at \$4.5 billion. There were 2.6 million hectares sown to barley, 648,000 hectares of sorghum, 578,000 hectares of oats and 1.9 million hectares of canola. In New South Wales, wheat is the main type of crop production producing 8.6 million tonnes in 1999-2000 (ABS, 2001a). Table 2.1 displays a summary of the hectares sown to various crops across states and territories in Australia for 2000.

**Table 2.1:**  
**Area (ha) of crops by State and Territory 2000.**

Crops	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT
	Number of hectares ('000)						
Wheat	3482	1222	1130	1872	4625	6	0
Oats	161	133	11	71	195	6	
Barley	477	580	132	846	545	9	
Lupins	125	36		71	1133		
Canola	523	283	1	200	909	1	
Hay	47	86	33	86	115	2	
Sugar Cane	24		409		2		
Sorghum	207	1	437		2		1
Cotton	263		172		3		
Tobacco		1	2				

Source: ABS Principal Agricultural Commodities, 7111.0, 1999-2000

## 2.2.2 Horticulture

In 1999-2000, Australia produced 1.3 million tonnes of grapes, 320,000 tonnes of apples, 510,000 tonnes of oranges, and 257,000 tonnes of bananas. Australian vegetable growers produced 1.2 million tonnes of potatoes, 247,000 tonnes of onions, 414,000 tonnes of tomatoes and 283,000 tonnes of carrots (ABS, 2001b). Table 2.2 displays the various types of horticultural production across the States and Territories.

**Table 2.2:**  
**Horticulture by State and Territory 2000.**

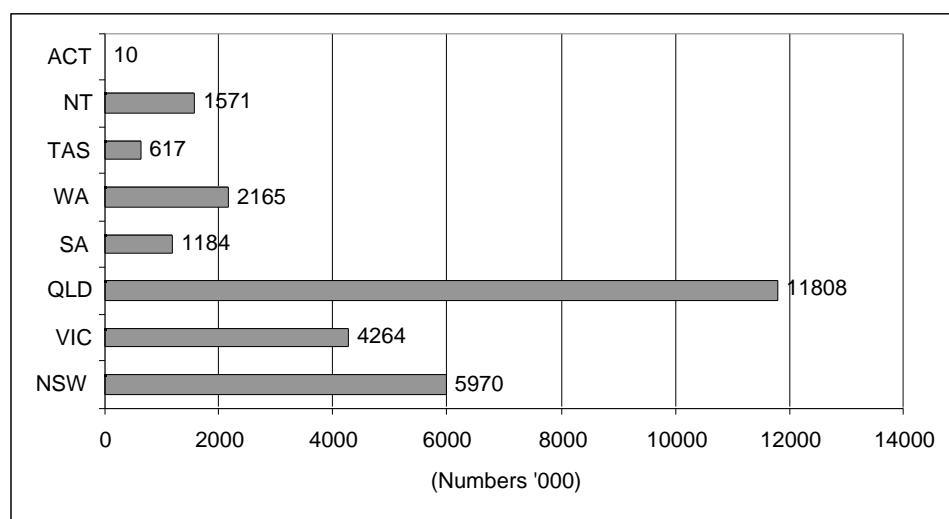
Horticulture type	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
	Number of trees ('000)							
Citrus	4002	1316	995	1978	213	0	2	0
Apples / Pears	1460	2725	656	723	890	1060	0	1
Stone Fruits	2078	1993	710	609	554	87	0	0
Other Fruit	131	18	1013	26	111	0	102	0
Nuts	1534	395	909	426	0	0	0	0
	Number of hectares							
Berries	348	382	294	53	96	28	0	2
Tropical Fruit	2506	0	11794	0	342	0	256	0
Grapes	32269	36257	2171	59807	8281	761	280	35
Vegetables	17361	31690	39508	12702	10697	15247	234	5

Source: ABS Agricultural Commodities, 7121.0, 1999-2000

### 2.2.3 Livestock industry

Australia is the world's largest exporter of meat and livestock and thus is reliant on international trade. Fierce competition and geographical isolation has required Australian farmers to be innovative in order to survive. Consequently, Australia has the most efficient sheep and cattle production in the world (MLA, 2001).

**Beef:** The national meat cattle herd was approximately 24.4 million head as at 30 June 2000. The New South Wales herd of 5.3 million represents 22% of the national total. Beef cattle operations are the most common type of activity in Australia with 76,700 operations nationwide. There are 10,806 beef cattle operations located in New South Wales. (ABS, 2001b). Figure 2.1 presents the proportions of beef cattle numbers by State and Territory.

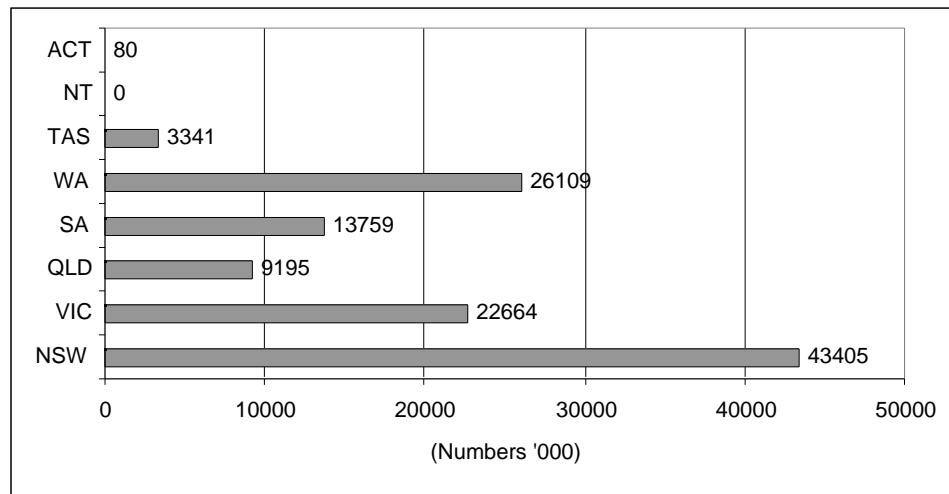


**Figure 2.1: Beef Cattle numbers ('000) by State and Territory, 2000.**  
(Source: ABS Agricultural Commodities, 7121.0, 1999-2000)

The Australian Beef Industry is valued at approximately \$4.5 billion with over 2 million tonnes of product produced in 1999. Australia only produces a small percentage of the world's beef supply (3.9%) but it is the largest beef exporter in the world. Almost 65% of the national total beef production is sent overseas to 100 countries. The value of these exports is over \$3 billion (MLA, 2001).

**Dairy cattle:** Nationwide there were 3.1 million dairy cattle as at 30 June 2000. New South Wales has 1,943 dairy operations holding 459,000 head, which is 15% of the national total. Victoria holds the majority (61%) of the national herd. Nationally, the number of dairy farms fell by 3% to 14,800 reflecting the changes in the industry as a result of deregulation (ABS, 2001b).

**Sheep and wool:** The Australian Sheep Industry is valued at approximately \$1 billion, with a national sheep and lamb flock of 118.6 million at 30 June 2000. There are 53,200 sheep and lamb operations nation wide (ABS, 2001b). Australia exports about 32% of total lamb production and 64% of total mutton production (ABARE, 2000). The principle livestock industry in New South Wales is sheep and wool. The New South Wales flock of 43.4 million is the largest in the country being 36% of the national total (ABS, 2001b). Figure 2.2 displays the proportions of sheep and lambs by State and Territory.



**Figure 2.2: Sheep and Lambs numbers ('000) by State and Territory, 2000.**

(Source: ABS Agricultural Commodities, 7121.0, 1999-2000)

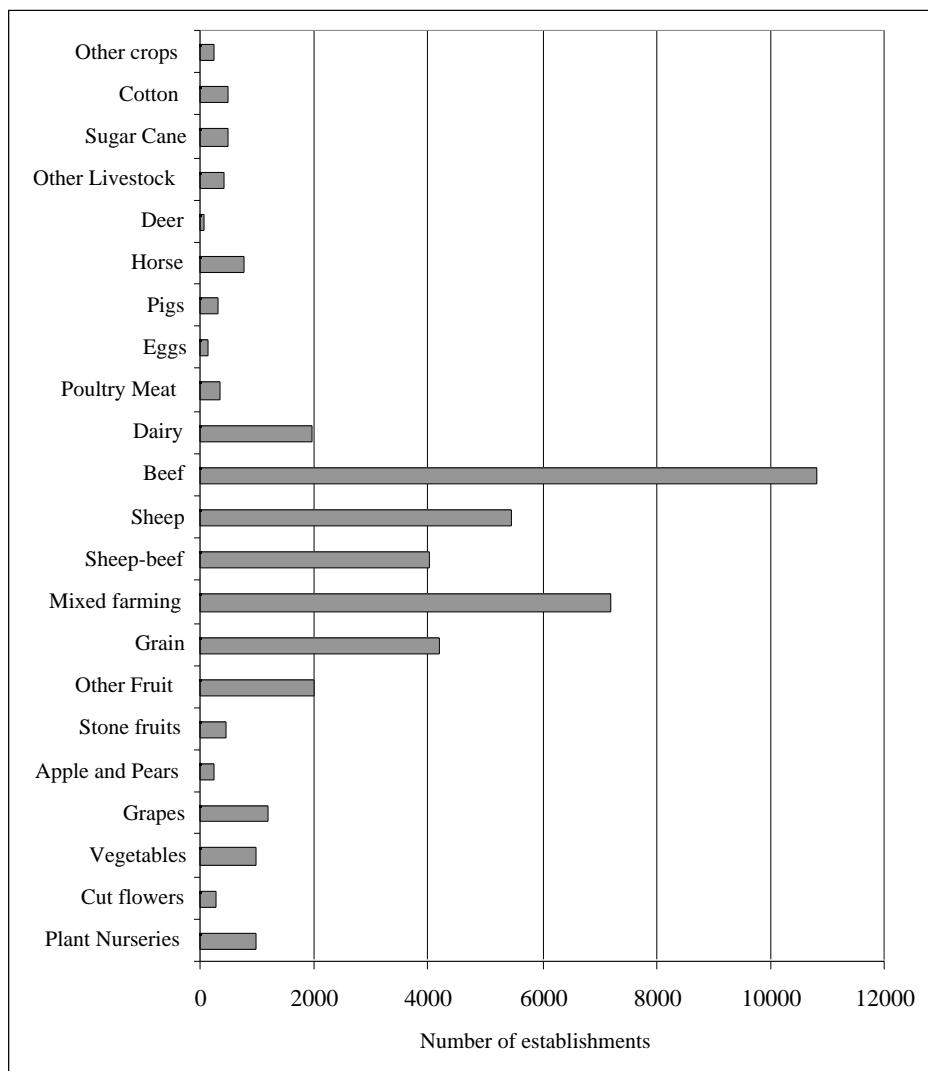
**Pigs:** There were 2.5 million pigs across the country as at 30 June 2000. New South Wales with 710,000 pigs has the largest proportion being 30% of the national total. There were 3400 piggeries across the country with 328 piggeries in New South Wales (ABS, 2001b).

**Goats:** The annual production of goat meat in Australia is valued around \$20 million, mohair is valued at approximately \$2 million and goat-milk products bring approximately \$1 million (MLA, 2001). The goat meat industry has shown remarkable growth over the past few years and is establishing itself as a significant entity in the red meat industry on both domestic and international markets. Goat-meat is the most widely consumed meat in the world with Australia being the largest exporter of goat-meat. There has also been a shortage on the world market of high quality goat fibres. Feral goats are hardy animals and are now being bred with domestic animals for the genetic benefits. Feral goats are being mustered in outback regions and fetching between \$25 and \$40 a head. Many producers are finding feral goats are bringing better returns than sheep and are less labour intensive (MLA, 2001).

**Chickens:** As at 30 June 2000, there were 845 farms with 72.9 million birds for meat production and 508 properties with 12 million birds for egg

production. New South Wales had 351 farms for meat production and 131 farms producing eggs (ABS, 2001b).

**Other industries:** Alpaca and llama, deer, emus and ostriches, camels, bees, rabbits and horses are among the many other diverse types of livestock production within New South Wales. Figure 2.3 displays the number of establishments by industry type within New South Wales.



**Figure 2.3: Number of establishments by industry type within New South Wales.**

(Source: ABS Principal Agricultural Commodities, 7121.0, 1999-2000)

## 2.3 PROPERTY CRIMES ON FARMS

New South Wales Police define rural crime as: *Crime pertaining to the rural sector and agriculture service industry* (NSW Police, 2000). The following describes the various types of property crime relevant to the agricultural industries that were examined within the present study. These descriptions draw on material

within the New South Wales Police Service Rural Crime Investigation Manual (2000) and from interviews conducted with police officers.

### 2.3.1 Theft

**Tools and equipment:** Items such as chain saws, angle grinders, whipper-snippers, air compressors, saddles, bridles and harnesses, are stolen from farm sheds; irrigation pipes and sprinkler heads can be taken from paddocks; and lights, radios, and UHF radios are stolen from tractors, headers, utilities or other farm vehicles. Items that are light and easy to carry and can be sold quickly are targeted. Much of this equipment is off-loaded at country clearing sales. The stolen equipment can be entered into a sale by an outside vendor. Agents do not have to submit the same returns as do secondhand dealers.

**Fuel:** The theft of fuel and diesel is a common problem on farms. Depending upon the size of their operation, farmers usually purchase fuel in bulk from local suppliers. Fuel is stored in drums, or in overhead, or underground tanks on farm. While farmers may padlock and chain fuel outlets, locks, chains, or hoses can be cut, or fuel can be syphoned from vehicles or machinery.

**Agricultural machinery:** Machinery such as tractors, grain augers, motorbikes, or trikes and quad runners, generators, trucks and utilities are stolen. Machinery left in paddocks while farmers are working in the area can be vulnerable to theft.

**Agricultural chemicals and pesticides:** Agricultural chemicals include a broad range of products used on farms, such as pesticides, fertilisers and herbicides, stock drenches and vaccines. Pesticides and herbicides, such as *Roundup CT*, *Glean*, *Ivomec* and *Brushoff*, are particularly subject to theft because of their value. This type of crime varies between regions and depends upon the type of crop production. Over the past decade there have been a series of large-scale chemical thefts across New South Wales. Thefts frequently are in excess of \$50,000. These incidents have been primarily break enter and stealing offences upon rural retail outlets in country towns. Some thefts have occurred from city warehouses for sales to markets in rural areas.

A recent trend in America is the theft of Anhydrous Ammonia from properties for use in the production of amphetamines. The chemical is being stolen in very small amounts and farmers are usually unaware that a theft has occurred. It is the only ingredient illegal drug laboratories cannot readily purchase in the U.S.(Netzel, 2001). This is a problem that could well affect Australian farmers in the future.

**Fencing materials:** Fencing is a necessary and expensive item on farms. It is an offence to steal, cut, break or damage any part of a fence or

gate. The penalty is a fine and an order to pay for the value of the property stolen. Electric fences are also prone to theft and are expensive set-ups to replace.

**Timber:** The theft of timber can range from people entering property and cutting firewood without permission through to the theft of valuable trees. It is an offence to steal or destroy dead wood lying on land that is privately owned.

**Horticulture:** Thefts occur of fruit or vegetables from orchards, vineyards or market gardens. As with many thefts of farm produce, these are very difficult to prove unless there are obvious signs of illegal entry to the property and damage to infrastructure or the environment. It is a crime to steal or destroy the whole or any part of a tree, shrub or plant.

**Livestock:** NSW Police describe the theft of livestock as the most significant rural crime. There are four types of livestock theft. These include:

- ‘Killers’ or freezer food. Stealing livestock for food has been a common practice in this country since the earliest days of pastoral settlement. There appears to be a general acceptance amongst farmers that this type of crime is commonplace and there is little that one can do to prevent it. The beast or (killer) may be killed at the site or moved elsewhere.
- Butchers may steal stock for slaughter to supply their businesses.
- For breeding purposes: Some farmers will steal stock for economic sustainability or to improve bloodlines. Usually unbranded or unmarked stock is taken or cows may be stolen with calves. Once the calves are weaned, the cows are either shot or returned to the place they were stolen from. The calves are then marked, tagged or branded with the thief’s own identification. Frequently these crimes occur between neighbouring properties. When confronted the thief will claim that the cattle must have strayed.
- Professional stock theft: These crimes usually involve large numbers of stock and are committed by highly skilled, well-equipped, and well-organised thieves with a ready market for stolen stock. Thieves may use helicopters, or ultra light air craft to muster stock quickly across boundary fences leaving no tracks evident on the ground.

In the western districts, poaching feral goats has become increasingly lucrative for thieves. Current legislation regarding trespass and the possession of feral goats is inadequate and fails to deter poachers. NSW Police are seeking a change to the laws to cover the theft, possession, receiving, and disposal of any animal without the owner’s consent.

Livestock theft is legislated under Section 126, *NSW Crimes Act 1900* stating that it is illegal to steal cattle, wilfully kill cattle with intent to steal the carcass, skin, or other part of the cattle, for a maximum penalty of imprisonment for fourteen years. Under Section 131, it is an offence to misuse another's stock or fraudulently brand, earmark or deface a brand of any stock.

**Seed or grain:** Seed and grain can be stolen directly from silos or storage sheds on farm. During harvest, trucks or bins full of grain may be taken directly from a paddock. Another scam occurs on properties where there is no weighbridge onsite. Some grain being delivered to silos in towns can be unloaded *en route* and the remainder is delivered for the farmer. The law prohibits theft or damage to any cultivated crop.

In the United States, adding confetti to the grain, which has the grower's identification printed on it can ensure proof of ownership of grain. The confetti, being biodegradable, breaks down over time in grain to be used for stock feed, or it can be blown out by fans. This concept is currently being explored in Australia.

**Wool, hides or skins:** With few exceptions, all those involved in buying or selling wool hides or skins must be licensed to regulate the industry. All licensees' dealings are recorded which provides police with some means of trace back. However, identification of wool is extremely difficult in the case of stolen bales, which can be worth up to \$4,000 each. A new system of installing electronic identification devices in each wool pack is being introduced. However, wool can be removed from the original bale and repressed into other bales to remove all trace of identification. Thefts vary according to the current value of wool.

### **2.3.2 Other types of crime**

**Vandalism:** Vandalism can be defined as the destruction or defacement of property occurring to a farm house, sheds, machinery or equipment, fences, livestock, crops, timber or other vegetation that is owned, rented, or leased by the farmer.

**Rural arson:** The deliberate lighting of fires causing the wilful and unlawful destruction, or damage by fire of property in rural Australia is a serious offence. Crops, stock and other produce as well as farm equipment and infrastructure can be lost.

**Break, enter and steal of rural premises:** Break and enter involves the illegal breaking into or attempt to do so of houses, sheds or buildings on farm. There has been a recent trend of organised thefts of valuable antique furniture from farmhouses. Often these thefts involve the complete removal of everything in the home. Abandoned or unoccupied

homes on farms are also subject to break and enter. These opportunities have been increasing as more farmers have left the land as a result of drought and economic decline over the past decade. Some properties have been bought up by neighbours creating larger holdings but leaving unoccupied houses on the property.

**Rural fraud:** Farmers are often victims of persons who fail to pay for goods or produce bought or services rendered. Farmers in isolated regions, who must purchase goods in other districts, may be sold defective goods, for example mouldy hay.

**Illegal trespassers:** Property owners resent the presence of trespassers on their property. Illegal trespassers are seen as responsible for damage to crops, failure to shut gates, arson and other environmental damage, vandalism, and disturbance to stock. Farmers are held responsible for stock being on public roads and can be held liable if a vehicle hits an animal. There is also a suspicion that illegal trespassers are potential thieves. There is a conflict with a perception by many urban dwellers that they have a right to enjoy nature irrespective if land is privately owned. Under the Local Government Act, it is an offence to deliberately leave a gate open or cut or damage a fence to allow animals to escape. The Inclosed Lands Act also proscribes the unlawful entry of persons onto private property.

**Illegal shooters:** For similar reasons, property owners resent illegal shooters. Illegal shooters may be responsible for the shooting of stock either by accident or by intention, and for having dogs that can attack livestock. Parts of an animal may be taken for human or animal consumption. This type of offence increases according to the price of skins or feral animals. The offender may cut fences or chains or may simply run down fences with a vehicle to enter a property.

Professional shooters commonly seek out wild pigs, kangaroos and foxes. Shooters who are known to the owner, seek permission to shoot on a property, and show respect for the infrastructure, crops and livestock may be welcomed by a property owner, particularly where the numbers of kangaroos or wild pigs etc need to be controlled. Graziers (particularly in the Western Division) have experienced difficulty with a number of shooters trespassing on their property looking to shoot wild pigs or poach feral goats.

**Dumping of rubbish:** This is a growing concern in rural Australia about environmental issues in line with the general increased social awareness about the state of the environment. The illegal treatment, storage or disposal of hazardous waste is a threat to public health, crops, livestock and wildlife. The illegal dumping of rubbish, waste, or car bodies on private properties is of concern to landowners.

**Growing of cannabis or other drug production on rural properties:** Due to the isolation of rural areas and the low numbers of rural police, some regions are prone to certain types of drug offences, such as large-scale drug cultivation, and clandestine amphetamine laboratories. The success of such operations can ultimately impact upon the availability of drugs in rural communities as well as in other locations, including cities. Cannabis can be cultivated in national parks and on some private properties where there are large blocks of scrub that are rarely entered by the owners.

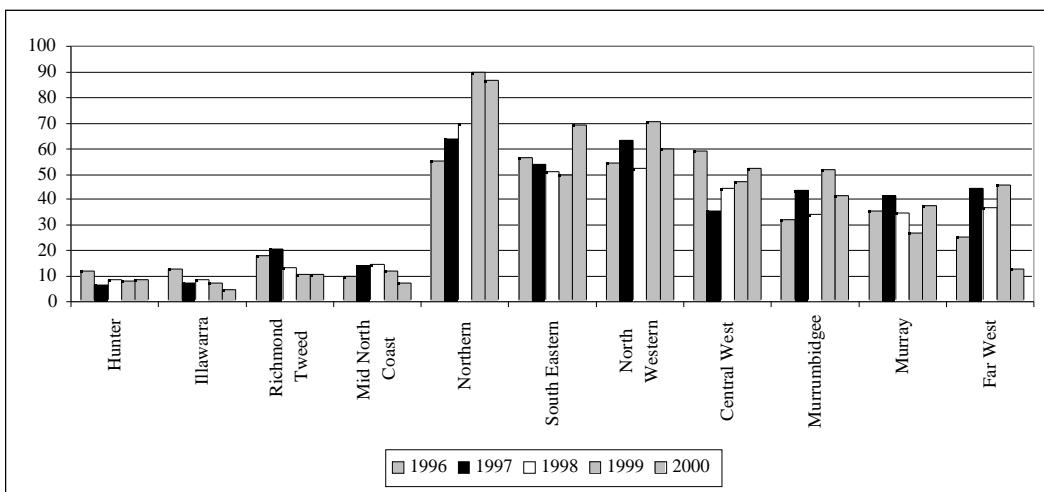
## 2.4 AGRICULTURAL CRIME STATISTICS

### 2.4.1 Official recorded crime data

The Australian Bureau of Statistics provides no actual data on agricultural crime. Livestock theft is a defined category within data collections for some states, including New South Wales, but nationally, livestock theft is incorporated under the category of "other theft". This offence is the largest category of crime and includes the theft of livestock and domestic animals along with a conglomeration of stealing offences, such as pick-pocketing, bad snatching, stealing, theft from a motor vehicle, theft of vehicle parts, fuel, boats or aircraft (AIC, 2000).

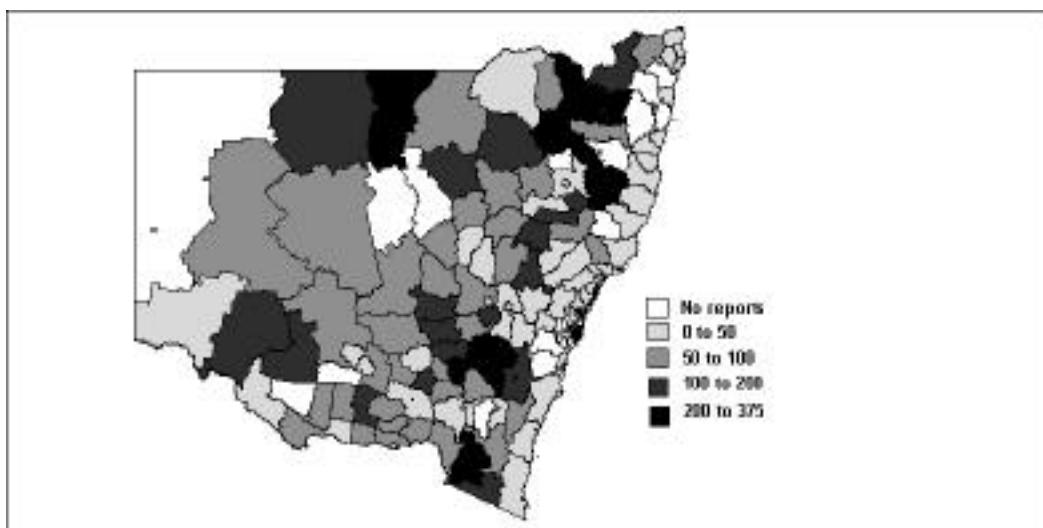
The New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) provides a breakdown of livestock theft by Local Government Area and Statistical Division across New South Wales. Figure 2.4 presents the rate per 100,000 population of livestock thefts by Statistical Division for the past five years. It is notable that the Northern SD consistently records the highest rates of offences. In 1999, reports of livestock thefts escalated to record highs in several regions. However, this was followed by a fall in rates in 2000 in most areas, with the exception of the Central West, Murray, and South Eastern Statistical Divisions. The other notable fact is that in the years of serious drought 1996/1997, some areas, such as the Central West and Murray Statistical Divisions, actually recorded higher rates of stock theft. This is surprising given such a shortage of feed and the fact that animals were not bringing high prices at the time. However, more stock would have been placed on agistment or on stock routes over this period, and therefore would have been more vulnerable to theft.

Figure 2.5 displays the location of livestock thefts for 2000 by Local Government Area. Over this period, there were 732 cases of reported stock theft in New South Wales. Stock theft is more prevalent in LGAs in the north of the state along the Queensland border. New South Wales Police report that it is often the case that stolen stock from New South Wales are disposed of at abattoirs, saleyards and feedlots located just over the border in southern Queensland.



**Figure 2.4: Rates per 100,000 population of livestock theft by Statistical Division, 1996-2000.**

(Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2001).



**Figure 2.5: Rates per 100,000 population of livestock theft by Local Government Area, 2000**

(Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2001)

## 2.5 FACTORS AFFECTING THE POLICING OF AGRICULTURAL CRIME

Controlling agricultural crime, particularly livestock theft in New South Wales, is compounded by a number of factors. Firstly, the area that has to be policed is vast. New South Wales covers an area of 801,428 sq km. There are four diverse agricultural regions, including the coastal lowlands, the eastern highlands, the western slopes, and the vast sparsely populated western plains, which cover about two-thirds of the State. **Land use in NSW is dominated by agriculture, however only 8% of the State is under crops, 7% under sown pastures and 15% under native pastures. The remaining area is either large areas of rough grazing in native**

**scrub or small area hobby farms. The principal agricultural activities in NSW in terms of value of agricultural production are wheat growing, wool growing, the raising of cattle for meat production and increasingly, cotton growing (ABS, 2001j).**

NSW Police currently has a force of 13,471 serving a population of 6,411,700 (NSW Police Service, 2001). A Rural Crime Unit was established in 1999 in Wagga Wagga, headed by the State Rural Crime Coordinator and assisted by one other officer. Under *Operation Nicaragua*, recorded crime data and mapping techniques have been enhanced to assist in identifying rural crime hotspots throughout the State. This task force also liaises with stock squads in other states. All agricultural crimes reported to police across New South Wales are flagged as such and the details are sent to *Operation Nicaragua* for collation by this unit (NSW Police, 1999).

There was a designated Police Stock Squad in this State, which dissolved in 1987. Officers now conduct agricultural crime investigations as part of their normal duties. In response to recent public and political concerns, in March 2001, the Police Minister announced the introduction of 32 Rural Crime Investigators in non-metropolitan areas, a five-day specialist-training course for rural police officers, and a dedicated intranet site for Police (Bateman, 2001). While these initiatives demonstrate an increased awareness of the importance of agricultural crimes, there is no increase in the numbers of police officers in rural areas. Rural crime officers must still attend to normal duties and therefore cannot devote themselves full time to agricultural crime investigations.

### **2.5.1 Policing crime within the livestock industry**

It is important to note that the nature of the livestock industry creates significant problems for police when investigating livestock thefts. As stated above, New South Wales carries 22% of the nation's cattle population and has the largest proportion (36%) of sheep and lambs in the country. With modern transport, stock can be stolen in one state, transported overnight to another state, and disposed of long before the theft is discovered. The Livestock Industry has several outlets for disposal. There are currently 23 licensed abattoirs, 20 domestic abattoirs, 188 saleyards, and 19 feedlots in New South Wales. The sheer numbers of stock that are processed makes it easy for thieves and hampers police investigations. The following summarises the primary means of disposal of livestock.

**Sale:** Stock are most commonly sold by live auction at saleyards. However, they may also be sold by direct consignment between the producer and the buyer, usually an abattoir or meatworks. Sales also occur as electronic auctions through the Computer Aided Livestock Marketing System (CALM) where stock are listed by description enabling purchase from anywhere in the country.

**Live export:** Live cattle exports for 1998-1999 were 713,000. The gross value of live cattle exports was \$342,667,000. Live sheep exports were 4,958,700 valued at \$181,671,000 (ABS, 2000d). NSW Police recently intercepted a theft of approximately 380 bulls that were bound for live export to the Middle East. The stock were stolen in Victoria and they were found in northern New South Wales. This was a well-organised theft involving the movement of several truckloads of stock (Limb, 2001).

**Abattoirs and meatworks:** There are about 500 meat processors in Australia processing vast numbers of cattle sheep pigs and goats on a daily basis (MLA, 2001). Processing leaves little trace of evidence for Police. In 1998-1999 there were 9.1 million cattle, 30.5 million sheep and lambs and 5.2 million pigs slaughtered (ABS, 2000d).

**Feedlots:** Feedlots have operated in Australia since the 1960s to finish cattle for market and to ensure a consistent supply of finished cattle. There are currently about 680 accredited feedlots Australia-wide producing approximately 850,000 grain fed cattle. Most feedlots are located in south-east Queensland and New South Wales in regions accessible to store cattle, grain and other feed sources. Feedlots are an outlet for stolen stock as they are generally not open to the public, stock are turned over in a short period of time and held in feedlots which have the capacity to hold up to 120,000 head at a time (MLA, 2001).

## 2.6 LEGISLATION

New South Wales Police operate under several Acts of Parliament to investigate and prevent agricultural crimes. These include:

- *Rural Lands Protection Board Act 1989.*
- *Crimes Act.*
- *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.*
- *Companion Animals Act.*
- *Impounding Act.*
- *Local Government Act.*
- *Property Stock and Business Act.*
- *Wool Hide and Skin Dealers Act, 1935.*
- *Inclosed Lands Act.*

Legislation is in place largely to limit and control the movement of stock to prevent the spread of disease. One of the difficulties confronting livestock theft investigations is the variation between the States regarding stock identification and stock movements.

**Stock movements:** The improvements in modern transport systems allow the movement of large numbers of stock between States for sale. Producers are not restricted to one state for the manufacture and sale of

their livestock. Consequently, police experience great difficulty in policing stock offences due to the large movement of stock between states for sale or slaughter. Victoria and South Australia have open borders with New South Wales. Stock transports are required to stop at border crossing checkpoints along the Queensland border. However, the majority are staffed only during daylight hours. There are varying regulations and paperwork regarding stock movements across the various states. This diversity complicates police investigations into livestock theft. In New South Wales, carriers carry a Transported Stock Statement and a health status certificate.

**Transported Stock Statement (TSS):** Section 88 of the *Rural Lands Protection Act 1989* requires all cattle, horses, sheep and goats transported within and out of New South Wales to be covered by a Transport Stock Statement. The TSS system was introduced in 1990, partly to assist the Police Service trace stolen stock and to authorise police to stop and search stock transports. The NSW Police Service has recently renewed its commitment to the enforcement of TSS requirements in an effort to reduce the incidence of stock theft. Under the Act, the driver of the vehicle is deemed to be in charge of the stock. The form is in two Parts. The stockowner, his or her employee, or agent, or the carrier completes Part 1, while the driver of the vehicle completes Part 2. The description of the stock on the form must match the stock on the vehicle. The TSS form relates to one journey only and must be retained for at least 36 months after the journey by the stockowner (agent or employee). Failure to carry a TSS can incur an Infringement Notice with a penalty of up to \$200 or a maximum penalty of \$2200 (Alchin, 2001). Problems arise for police checking transports where there are inadequate descriptions of the stock being carried. With so many new breeds of stock available, it is a hard task for police to be aware of them all. Producers who are punters within the stock market (buying and selling stock over short periods) may transport stock with many different breeds, brands, earmarks or tags and identification numbers.

Stock that is walked, or grazed on public roads or travelling stock reserves must also carry a specific permit. Routine stock movements require a stock licence.

**Vendor declarations:** Although not compulsory, stock for sale or slaughter usually have a vendor declaration to verify their health status and that they are free of chemical residue. Property tail tags must be attached to each animal. Each state has certain health regulations that must be complied with before stock can enter that state. Currently there is a move to have a National Vendor Declaration form to simplify and unify legislation on stock movements between states, which will greatly simplify police investigations.

**Stock Identification:** Methods of identification include, ear tagging, ear marking, freeze, hot iron or electric branding, tattooing and micro chipping. It is not compulsory to brand, earmark or ear-tag stock in New South Wales. However, all pigs and racehorses must be branded. Beehives must also be branded on the breed box. Earmarking of sheep is compulsory to identify the property of origin only. For those producers who wish to brand their stock, all earmarks, brands and tattoos that are used in the registered branding positions, must be registered with the nearest Rural Lands Protection Board (RLPB) in the name of the owner. There are 49 Boards across the state and there is no central brand index. Therefore, there may be several different producers with the same brand registered in the state within different RLPB areas. With saleyards mostly located in regional areas, it is likely that several Board areas are serviced by one saleyard (NSWAG, 2001).

All stock for sale or slaughter must have a tail tag that shows the registered number (Property Identification Code) of the property on which it last resided. The tail tags are to enable trace-back to the herd of origin for any diseases, chemical residue or other problems that emerge at time of slaughter. There are plans for the Police Service to have a centralised database of tail tag information (NSWAG, 2001).

Problems can still occur for police tracing stolen stock even where producers have been diligent in ensuring their stock are identified. Thieves can cut off earmarks, brands can be defaced, or another brand can be put over the existing brand. There are also difficulties for police investigations caused by the variations between the states in the legal requirements for stock identification.

**The National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS):** One solution to the problem of stock identification is the National Livestock Identification Scheme. Currently NLIS is a voluntary scheme designed to improve trace-back and monitoring systems for stock diseases and chemical residues to allow Australian producers to compete on the international market. The European Union (EU) requires strict quality control of livestock sales and full traceability of all cattle slaughtered for their market. All cattle held on EU accredited properties must be identified with NLIS approved identification devices. All sale transactions of individual animals are automatically recorded and traced. Therefore, the system can aid crime prevention by providing a means of tracing stolen stock (MLA, 2001).

The basis of the NLIS is a consistent system of property registration, which uses an 8-character property identification code on the identifiers applied to individual animals. These devices contain a radio transponder, which can be read by a machine, and the information is automatically conveyed to a computerised database. In most cases these devices are ear-tags, but they can also be a bolus, which is inserted down the throat of the

animal where it remains lodged in the rumen of the animal for its lifetime. These devices offer unalterable permanent identification and coupled with scanners at saleyards, feedlots and abattoirs, they will enable immediate identification of ownership through a national register and enable each animal to be reliably traced from its property of birth until slaughter. Many saleyards, feedlots and abattoirs throughout Australia are now installing readers and links to the NLIS database (MLA, 2001). However, the control of livestock theft by this system will be ineffective until all sale outlets are equipped with scanning devices. The current position of the National Farmers Federation is not to support the compulsory participation in a National Livestock Identification Scheme due to the costs to producers particularly those with large herds. The current cost of a rumen bolus is \$7.50; ear-tags are \$3.50. However, there are opportunities to lease boluses at \$2.00 each, as they can be recycled.

Victoria has been instrumental in encouraging NLIS participation by providing compensation for graziers. Recently, the Victorian Government took steps to ensure all cattle are permanently identified before they leave the property of birth. NLIS tags are subsidised at \$2.50 each for graziers and \$1 million has been provided for the installation of scanners at saleyards, abattoirs and the administration of tag distribution (Deane, 2001). Implementation of the NLIS in all states will greatly assist police in tracing stolen stock across state borders, and will transcend the problem of varying state laws. The use of the rumen bolus will provide permanent unalterable identification, which will provide proof of ownership in any legal dispute.

## **2.7 SUMMARY**

This chapter has presented an overview of the agricultural industries in Australia to provide an understanding of the scope of the industry to be policed. An overview of the various types of legislation that govern the livestock industry was also presented. The difficulties experienced in policing the industry can be appreciated when considering the size and the complexity of the industry and the legislation that governs it. The chapter also presented a summary of the types of agricultural crime that can occur.

Official recorded crime data provides no national data on livestock theft or on the broader category of agricultural crime. In addition, state recorded crime data varies from state to state making it difficult to estimate the true extent of agricultural crime across Australia. The present study will provide a timely and necessary insight into this unique and complex type of crime.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Research in Agricultural Crime**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a review of the Australian and international literature on agricultural crime. The literature searches utilised the World Wide Web, the University of New England's Library and various electronic databases available.

### **3.2 HISTORY OF AGRICULTURAL CRIME**

There has been a long history of agricultural crime in this country. Throughout the 1830s, as squatters took up large holdings across southern parts of Australia, police reports of the time identified stock theft as a constant problem. The fortunes of many of rural Australia's leading families were believed to have been built on such criminal activity (McQuilton, 1993).

In the 1860s, the first selection acts were passed to encourage permanent settlement in small-scale agricultural land use. The concept was based upon the yeoman ideal that the true source of wealth lay in the land, and that farming would encourage permanency in settlement, independence, self-sufficiency and democratic values. However the intrusion of the selectors into the squatters' domain led to fierce competition for land and water. The selectors struggled against a harsh and unfamiliar environment, inadequate infrastructure, and against the economic and political power of the squatters. The failure of selection brought poverty and social antagonism between the two groups. Police reported an increase in crimes traditionally associated with agrarian Ireland: squatters' fences and haystacks were burnt and the theft of stock became a regional tradition (McQuilton, 1993).

Livestock were stolen for food, a practice some squatters were prepared to tolerate, as well as for a livelihood. Selectors' sons, who were great bushmen, formed gangs that were often involved in the stolen stock trade. Australia's most famous bushranger, Ned Kelly, was well known as a leader of such a stock theft ring or what he preferred to call, 'wholesale and retail horse and cattle dealing'. The squatters formed Stock Protection Associations, held meetings across the region, and offered substantial rewards to the police for the arrest of suspects.

Despite a full-scale police crackdown, the incidence of stock theft continued to rise. In 1878, the regional press reported that the morality of the rural districts had reached 'an all time low'. What concerned authorities most was the widespread sympathy and support that the Kelly gang commanded from the regions' selectors (McQuilton, 1993).

The police were outclassed, out-mounted and ill-equipped for pursuing bushrangers. Prior to 1862, they were also confined by laws that prevented them from pursuing criminals into neighbouring districts. They were also few in number. In 1863, there were 400 officers to police the entire State of New South Wales and most were poorly skilled for the task (Stackpool, 2001).

One of the most famous cattle thefts, which became part of outback folklore, concerned the bushranger Henry Readford, more popularly known as 'Captain Starlight'. In 1870, in the company of two others, Readford stole one thousand head of cattle from Bowen Downs Station in central western Queensland. At the time, Bowen Downs Station covered 1.75 million acres and ran a herd of about 70,000 cattle. The stock were stolen from yards at many locations along the Thomson River, and driven 1300 km through the largely unchartered channel country to the Blanche Water Station in northern South Australia where Readford sold them for £5000 (McCarthy, 1987; Walkabout, 2001).

The mob included an imported white bull that Readford sold at Hill Hill Station in South Australia so that he could purchase supplies. The bull was easily recognised as belonging to Bowen Downs, which led to Readford's subsequent arrest and trial in Roma. Locals packed the courtroom, captivated by Readford's consummate bushcraft and daring. Forty-one of the forty-eight people called as possible jurors were dismissed because they were prejudiced. The evidence against Readford was overwhelming. The defence offered no witnesses and complained that Readford had been gaoled without trial. The jury retired for an hour and then delivered their verdict of not guilty. This verdict outraged the judiciary and on the 5 April 1873, the governor of Queensland ordered that the criminal jurisdiction of the District Court at Roma be withdrawn for two years. The one good outcome from the incident was the introduction of the central system of cattle brand registration in Queensland. On the 1 May 1872, Bowen Downs registered their cattle brand (McCarthy, 1987; Walkabout, 2001).

### **3.3 CURRENT ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA**

As we enter the new millennium, much has remained unchanged. The problem of crime on farms appears to be widespread in all states in Australia. Numerous newspaper articles over the past year have highlighted the concerns of graziers and the severe financial losses they are experiencing through crime: cattle rustling in particular. In one incidence alone, a farmer lost 94 head of cattle, valued at over \$62,000. Police emphasised the sheer scale of this crime, suggesting that the theft of this number of cattle would have required making multiple trips in a

double deck semi-trailer and at least three hours to muster the cattle by motorbike and a further hour to load them (Hurley, 2000).

In addition to these larger and more organised thefts, farmers are also experiencing repeated losses of a few cattle at a time. A farmer in the New England District of New South Wales has experienced repeated incidences of stock theft that have cost over \$100,000 (Limb, 2001). In western Victoria, ongoing thefts of sheep have seen producers incurring losses of up to \$30,000 a year. Young weaner sheep about to be shorn are taken, preferably twenty at a time to fit in a trailer. Stud sheep have also been targeted. Thieves appear to be well organised and are highly skilled in handling livestock and sheep dogs (Baggio, 2000).

In Queensland, soaring beef prices had led to a record number of stock theft investigations in recent months and the value of missing cattle is estimated to be \$2.5 million. Almost 1000 cattle were missing from one North Queensland property. Sheep, goats and horses are among other livestock missing. Police report that professional thieves have the equipment and transport to make quick getaways over huge distances, often crossing state borders to offload stolen cattle at abattoirs or through export markets. Thieves usually strike at night, frequently taking advantage of outer western districts with small, unmanned police stations (Hansen 2001).

One of the largest thefts of stock worth \$150,000 occurred in May 2000 in Western Australia. A pastoralist from the far north Kimberley region was charged with the thefts of more than 800 cattle from neighbouring stations over a six-month period in 1998 (ABC, 2000).

In response to the apparently escalating problem of livestock theft, a number of crime prevention and monitoring initiatives are being examined. In particular, the National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS), which incorporates electronic tagging, has been put forward as a means of consistent identification and tracking of stock (Cawood, 2001). Articles in Australian Police journals discuss the recent rise in the incidence of stock theft and describe police responses to these concerns (Margetts, 1998; Wockner, 1998; NSW Police Service, 1999). A ministerial rural crime working party was formed in New South Wales to seek solutions to the problem of crime on farms namely, stock, wool and chemical theft and trespassing on farmland. The working party reported to the Minister in March 2001. The working party found there was a need for increased penalties and enforcement for the problem of trespass, which causes serious concern for safety and security on isolated properties. However, most of the working party's recommendations focussed primarily on stock theft, as this was the area of primary concern. Some of the main recommendations in the report included:

- Requirements for record keeping for agents under the Wool, Hide and Skin Dealers Act be tightened.
- Support for compulsory stock identification (preferably with an approved National Livestock Identification Scheme device) and recommendations that the Government look at appropriate incentives for farmers to participate.

- That a standardised National Vendor Declaration form be implemented which satisfies the requirements of the Transported Stock Statement.
- That NSW Police appoint a Rural Crime Investigator in each rural Local Area Command who would have the appropriate training to understand the agricultural industries (Pastoral and Agricultural Crime Working party, 2000).

## **3.4 RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL CRIME**

### **3.4.1 Australian studies**

It was surprising to discover that despite a long and colourful history and persistence of livestock theft in this country, there has been relatively little published Australian research on agricultural crime. In the review of the literature, only one unpublished study that focused upon agricultural crime in Australia was discovered. Torning (1991) investigated agricultural crimes in the Goulburn District of New South Wales. Nearly 16% of Torning's 428 respondents reported the theft of stock and farm animals within the past year. This was followed by 12.2% for the theft of farm machinery and equipment, 7.9% for the theft of fruits and vegetables, 2.6% for stolen saddlery, 2.4% for the theft of wool and hides, and 2.3% for grain or stock food. Other types of items stolen included chemicals, fuel, fencing and gates, radios, tyres and motors. The financial losses for property stolen ranged from \$20 for a single sheep through to \$13,000 for the theft of 180 sheep.

A large proportion of crimes (55%) were not reported to police. The main reasons the farmers gave for not reporting crimes were that they considered many incidents to be trivial, or that the police would not be able to help. In addition, the amount of time between a crime's probable occurrence and its detection was a deterrent for reporting thefts. This was especially true for the theft of stock. The large size of farms and the difficulty of continuously checking stock meant that it was difficult for farmers to become aware of an incident of stock theft and report it in a timely fashion to the police. Two out of five reports of arson were not reported because one believed the incident to be too trivial and in the other, the offence was committed by a juvenile known to the property owner and he wanted to keep the problem a private matter (Torning, 1991).

In a survey of crimes against Australian businesses conducted in 1993, primary industry was included as one of five types of industry examined (Walker, 1995). Burglary and theft were the most common type of crime affecting a quarter of the total sample of 966 businesses. Only one quarter of the sample reported a crime during the past year. Primary producers were least likely to perceive crime as serious for their businesses. With the exception of equipment identification numbers, farmers were less likely than others to use crime prevention measures. Primary producers along with retail businesses however, were more likely to participate in some form of community crime prevention activities.

It was interesting to note that the non-reporting of crime was evident amongst those businesses that were victims of shoplifting. Less than one in four victimised businesses reported all or most of the incidents. Lack of evidence and 'not serious' were the most common reasons for not reporting to police. There was also some recognition that police effectively 'could do nothing' to help (Walker, 1995). These reasons for non-reporting are similar to those found by Torning (1991) amongst farmers in Goulburn.

One other study investigated one particular aspect of security on farms in Australia. The study of 600 landholders in central west New South Wales (Jenkins, 1998), investigated farmer attitudes to the increasing use of rural areas for tourism and recreational activities. The study found that the landholders were concerned about the general public using their land in relation to the possible damage to crops, disturbance to stock, failure to shut gates, environmental damage, vandalism and indiscriminate shooting. Respondents were particularly concerned about illegal trespassers on their properties. Respondents who had been victims of crime were particularly reticent to allow access to their land. The authors reported on an earlier survey by the Graziers Association of New South Wales that was conducted with its members in 1975. The survey found less than 50% of the graziers would grant access to their land. Access was only provided according to specific conditions being met. Graziers were concerned about shooting, litter, gates, arson, and disturbance to stock, violence, vandalism and theft. These concerns were based on evidence of incidences that had occurred which were damaging and potentially dangerous (Graziers Association of NSW 1975, cited in Jenkins 1998).

Research conducted previously by the authors, which examined the relationship between the economic and social characteristics of Australian rural communities and crime (Jobes, Barclay, and Donnermeyer, 2000), investigated agricultural crime in one inland rural community. Police were most concerned about the level of crime on farms in the district and believed local farmers were complacent about security and did not check their stock often enough. Large machinery, such as headers, was left in paddocks during the off-season. Springs were taken from disk ploughs. Header lights and radios from vehicles or tractors were stolen.

Two of the four farmers interviewed had been victims of stock theft. One farmer reported the theft of over a hundred sheep and in a separate incident; sheep valued at \$3000 had been stolen. Although they stressed that crime was not an issue, all of the farmers interviewed had heard of theft from other properties in their district, such as the theft of toolboxes and radios from vehicles or sheds.

Two farmers saw no point in spending money on security measures or taking precautions, as they believed it was impossible to prevent crime. One saw no reason to lock a tractor to prevent theft because it is more expensive to replace a tractor window than a radio. One farmer believed his property was secure, as it was some distance from the road and most of the sheds, fuel and equipment were near the house. Three other farmers did take precautions by locking farm utilities and ensuring tractors and fuel were not left near the road.

The farmers expressed a dislike of strangers on their properties. Trespassers left gates open and farmers were suspicious of their motives for being there. Shooters were of particular concern. One did not mind people on the property if they came to the house to seek permission to be there (Jobes, et al, 2000).

### **3.4.2 Overseas research**

Agricultural products are worth \$1000 billion annually in the United States. In a review of agricultural crime in that country, Swanson, Chamelin and Territo (2000) estimate that the economic impact of agricultural crime to be as high as \$5 billion annually. There is evidence that urban-based criminals are both planners and perpetrators of crimes in rural areas, including those on farms. With increasing numbers of conglomerate farms and orchards, there has been a growing reliance on migrant or city based labour. Some workers have been responsible for crimes on farms or have passed information to criminals for a fee. Urban centres are also conduits for the disposal of stolen property from rural areas (Swanson, Chamelin and Territo, 2000).

Thefts from farms include tools, equipment, machinery, chemicals, timber, livestock and other farm produce. When the prices of commodities increase, thefts may increase 20% or more. For example, when crops are reduced due to climatic extremes, the price of a product increases and consequently the product becomes more vulnerable to theft. Nationally, there is approximately \$100 million worth of timber stolen annually. Cattle thieves steal about 20,000 cattle worth \$121 million. The authors maintain that this figure may underestimate the actual losses as at least half of all livestock thefts go unreported. In California and surrounding states, thieves are stealing cattle to support drug addictions. Thieves can realise full market value for their stolen goods. Between 30% and 40% of all cattle thefts in California are drug related. (Swanson, et al, 2000).

Research on agricultural crime in the United States has been confined to a small cluster of studies conducted in the 1980's, with no subsequent research. One early study of 100 farmers in West Virginia (Bean and Lawrence, 1978) found theft was the most frequent type of crime experienced. Vandalism and trespass were also common events. Few incidences were reported to police. The greatest financial costs to producers were caused by arson. Crime prevention on farms involved removing keys from vehicles, keeping dogs and firearms, locking the house, and notifying someone when gone overnight.

Donnermeyer (1987) in a survey of crime on farms and ranches in Ohio found that vandalism was the most frequently reported type of crime by 14% of all respondents. Nearly all incidents were against farm property. Incidents ranged from being fairly minor to severely costly damage to farm machinery. The second most common type of crime reported by ten per cent of respondents was theft, mostly of tools, fuel, seed and chemicals. Items such as radios, batteries and cassette players were frequently taken from vehicles. There were few reports of livestock theft or the theft of farm machinery. Break and enters were reported to farm buildings (6%) and farm houses (2%). Seven percent reported incidences of

fraud, namely the receipt of bad checks for sale of farm commodities or the purchase of defective farm inputs, such as fertiliser, seed, pesticide and other supplies for animals, machinery and building materials. Following this research, O'Block, Donnermeyer and Doeren (1991) developed a zone approach to agricultural operations that divided properties into four areas, each with a unique set of security challenges. These included the property boundaries, central work areas, storage areas and outlying paddocks.

In the late 1980s, several American states participated in the Southern Regional Research Project S-193 'Victimisation and Prevention of Rural Crime in the South'. In the statewide survey of farmers across Alabama (Dunkelberger, Clayton, Myrick and Lyles, 1992) more than half of the sample of 428 farmers who responded reported some type of victimisation of their property. Many had experienced multiple incidences of crime. Theft of farm property was the most common type of victimisation (47%), followed by vandalism (43%) and burglary (32%). Larger farm operations were more susceptible to crime than were smaller holdings. More than one-third of respondents believed crime was increasing. However, few of the farmers had initiated security measures on farm. The authors concluded that the solution to farm property crime lay in better on-farm prevention.

A similar survey of 144 farmers in Mississippi (Deeds, Frese, Hitchner and Solomon, 1992) found farmers who had been victims of crime in the previous year reported vandalism (24%), break and enter (18%), and theft (22%). Sixty eight per cent of victims of vandalism reported more than one occurrence. Farm machinery, buildings, fences and gates were the most common targets of vandalism. Break and enter occurred to farm buildings (49%), farm homes (26%) and barns (25%). Thefts occurred of crops (17%), livestock (13%) farm equipment (43%) and materials such as fuel, chemicals and seed (50%). Twenty three percent had experienced more than one type of farm theft. Trespassing on farmland was the greatest concern of respondents (80%), followed by poaching (77%), break and enter (67%), dumping rubbish (64%) and vandalism (59%).

The study found the most common types of security on Mississippi farms were having farm buildings visible to neighbours (73%), outside lights on farm buildings (60%), no trespass and warning signs (60%) locks on barns and other buildings (56%), security lights (54%) and locks on gates (44%). Fifty seven per cent had a watchdog. Seventy percent had a handgun for protection. Most participants had a neighbour watch the farm while they were away. Just over half attended to locks on doors of farm buildings and maintained records of machinery and equipment. However, the majority failed to have any form of identification on farm produce. Forty per cent believed crime on farms had increased over the previous two years. Yet only 13% had invested in insurance or security measures on farm over the previous three years (Deeds et al 1992).

The study of farm crime in Arkansas (Farmer and Voth, 1989) found high levels of victimisation with significant financial losses for farmers. Twenty-three per cent of participants reported vandalism, 27% reported theft, and 10% reported break and enter. Properties closer to urban settlements had higher rates of

victimisation. Areas with small holdings, where farmers lived on their properties and urbanisation was low, experienced the lowest rates of crime.

In the area of small farm holdings, only 55% of crimes were reported to police. The reasons given by farmers were that they believed nothing could be done (67%), the crime was not important (29%), it was inconvenient (10%), the police would not want to be bothered (22%), or they were afraid of reprisal (10%). The authors concluded that this community where there was a high level of immigration and a large non-farming population, farmers had less faith in the ability of local police to serve them (Farmer and Voth, 1989).

The study in Tennessee (Cleland, 1990) found that within a sample of 531 farmers, one fourth had experienced problems with vandalism over the previous twelve months. Farm fences and gates were most commonly targeted. Some farmers also reported roadside littering and vandalism to livestock, farm buildings, equipment and materials. Nine per cent had experienced burglary while one-sixth reported theft. Farm equipment was the most common target of theft followed by feed, fertilizer and livestock. Larger farms were more prone to victimisation. The study found that respondents' perceptions of the frequency and seriousness of farm crime and vandalism were greater than the actual experience. Cleland surmised that events on farm or in the neighbourhood had become etched in the respondents' memory and generated feelings that crimes occurred more frequently than they actually did. Security measures involved ensuring farm buildings were visible from a neighbour's house, locks were on fuel tanks and security lights were installed.

However, the study conducted with 1200 farmers in Kentucky (Peale 1989) found that crime on farms was not a primary concern for farmers in that state. Of the 462 respondents, 77% reported they had not been victims of crime over the previous year. However, respondents reported they were more concerned about their personal and property safety and they believed crime and vandalism was on the increase. House burglary was the most frequently reported crime, while gates and fences were the most common target of vandals. Security on farm was limited to security lights and a reliance on the fact that farms were small enough to be in sight of a neighbour.

A search of studies conducted in other countries revealed a recent study of farm crime in Scotland conducted in 1998 (George Street Research Ltd., 2000). The survey found that one in three farmers (32%) across all farm types, and in all regions of Scotland, reported experiencing crime on their farm over the past five years. Frequently occurring crimes included vandalism, petty theft and the illegal dumping of rubbish or toxic waste. Thefts occurred of fuel, livestock, machinery, gates, all-terrain-vehicles, chainsaws, fencing and tools, tractor radios and computers. Some farmers also experienced arson and housebreaking. The average cost of these incidents was £1400. Livestock theft caused the greatest financial loss to farmers.

Farmers on small properties or properties located in semi-urban areas, or near main roads were particularly vulnerable to crime. Urban-fringe farmers

experienced repeat incidences of crime. Farmers living in remote locations, or in scattered communities experienced the lowest levels of crime.

Seventy-six per cent of the participants reported that they were now more security conscious than five years ago. The farmers believed traditional crime prevention measures; such as securing farm buildings and farm dogs were more effective than sophisticated and costly security systems. Most were supportive of the 'Farm Watch' scheme and the majority were satisfied with the police response to crimes. Less than half of all incidents of farm crime recorded in the survey were reported to police and this was particularly the case for repeat victims. Farmers failed to report crimes because they believed the crime was 'trivial' or the sort of crime, for example rubbish dumping, that the police would not be able to resolve. The farmers surveyed believed those responsible for petty farm crime were 'young people' and 'local children' and acknowledged the difficulty police face in taking action against such suspected perpetrators. Where farmers had reported crime to the police, the majority were satisfied with the overall response. The farmers appeared to accept a certain amount of farm crime as an unwelcome, but inevitable, part of farming. The majority did not think farm crime was a major problem for the industry but nevertheless implemented common sense, and workable crime prevention measures.

### **3.5 RATIONALE FOR THIS RESEARCH**

Empirical research in agricultural crime is relatively rare here in Australia as well as overseas. The literature review has revealed that crime on farms has been a part of agriculture in Australia since the early days of settlement. The literature suggests that there is a certain reluctant acceptance amongst primary producers that crime, particularly livestock theft, is part of life and there is little that they or the police can do about it. However, recent media reports relating to livestock thefts suggest that the costs to producers have been considerable. Current political and media concerns about the rise of livestock theft necessitate an objective analytical approach to examining the issues of victimisation on farms. The economic contribution of the agricultural industry is vital to the nation and the threat of stolen stock with fraudulent health status papers entering domestic or international markets is of concern.

The present study will address the current lack of research into this important issue through an investigation of the extent and impact of crime on farms as perceived by farmers in New South Wales. Social research such as this provides a means of obtaining information about victimisation within specific populations where existing data sources are inadequate. Surveying both actual and potential agricultural crime victims reveals information about the beliefs, opinions and behaviours of farmers relative to agricultural crime, as well as data on their experience of crime (Dunkelberger, 1992). Such information is necessary for the future development of crime prevention policy.

### **3.6 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the literature on agricultural crime was reviewed and discussed. It is clear that agricultural crime is historically established in this country but its persistence calls for new responses. The lack of research into this type of crime in Australia is surprising and highlights the relevance of the present investigation. The few studies that have been conducted revealed that stock theft and the theft of tools and equipment were the main types of crime experienced by Australian farmers. Illegal trespassers and shooters were a major concern to producers. Studies overseas, in both the United States and Scotland, revealed that vandalism and the theft of tools and equipment were the most common types of crime experienced on farms. However, the non-reporting of crimes to police was evident in several studies and is clearly a common problem in each of the countries. There were common reasons for the non-reporting of crimes, such as the crime being too trivial to report or that there was little the police could do. These issues and others are explored within the present study and the findings are discussed in subsequent chapters.

# **Chapter Four**

## **Methodology**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the procedure by which data were collected for this study is outlined. Data were collected by two methods, a mailed, self-administered survey and through interviews with farmers, police officers, magistrates and various professionals within the agricultural industries.

### **4.2 THE MAIL SURVEY**

From the approximately 30,000 primary producers located throughout New South Wales, a random sample of 1100 was selected to be surveyed by mail. The survey instrument was developed, reviewed by members of the New South Wales Police force and representatives of the New South Wales Farmers' Association and piloted with 100 farmers before being mailed in the spring of 2000. The names and addresses of participants were drawn from a list of farmers contained in Telstra's Yellow Pages. The sample represented a range of agricultural industry types including farmers, graziers, fruit, vegetable, flower, and nut growers, Alpaca, Llama, goat, pig, dairy, pig and poultry farmers, horse stud breeders, beekeepers, and wineries and vineyards. A covering letter outlining the purpose of the study accompanied each questionnaire. A reminder notice and questionnaire was sent to non-respondents after four weeks.

In the questionnaire, farmers were asked to supply details on the type of commercial agricultural production they were engaged in. Livestock producers were asked additional questions on stock management. Some geographical and topographical information was sought about their properties to enable the data to be mapped using GIS technology. Farmers were also asked about safety and security on-farm to seek a measure of their concern about safety and the degree they act upon those concerns with security measures on-farm. Participants were also asked whether they had been a victim of various types of crime including, the theft of livestock, seed or grain, wool, timber or other produce, machinery, tools and small equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, or fencing materials as well as crimes such as vandalism, arson, fraud, break and enter, illegal trespassers or shooters, the dumping of rubbish on farmland, and the growing of cannabis or other drug

production on farmland. Participants were asked to indicate whether the incidences had occurred in the previous two years, and whether or not they had reported the crime to police. The study also investigated farmers' subjective opinions and attitudes towards agricultural crime; who or what they blame for crime; their level of fear of crime; and their opinions on policing in their district.

In January 2001, a close of survey form was mailed to persistent non-respondents to determine the extent to which the original set of respondents were truly representative of farmers' experiences with victimisation, and to provide a means for adjusting or weighing cases for estimates to the population. The aim was to address any response bias within the sample, as it is possible that respondents were largely those who had suffered a recent loss from crime or who had an unusually high concern about crime in their area. This survey included a covering letter explaining the need to have a few questions answered by those who were unable to respond to the main survey to ensure that the data were a true representation of crime on farms across New South Wales. Basic information was sought on the type of agricultural production, whether respondents had been the victims of various types of property crime and whether or not they had reported the incident. Respondents were also asked to rate how serious crime on farms was in their district on a five-point scale, ranging from 'very serious' to 'not serious at all'.

The overall response rate to the mail survey after allowing for 'return to senders' where respondents had left the district, was 62% which provided data on a sample of 393 properties for analysis on the main survey and a further 227 respondents to the close of survey questionnaire.

## **4.3 THE ANALYSIS**

### **4.3.1 Unit of analysis**

Farm operation size was used as the primary descriptive unit of analysis. Operation size was a composite variable comprising the geographical location of the property, the total area size, the numbers of livestock, and the cropping area. Total area of a property is an inadequate measure of size as acreage in Coastal/Range regions is worth considerably more than the same sized acreage in the outback. The geographical location was defined using Department of Conservation and Land Management topographical, cadastral and property maps which define areas by the density of coverage. These produced three areas:

1. Coastal/Range areas to approximately the ridge of the Dividing Range.
2. Central NSW from the range to the Newell Highway.
3. Outback NSW including all areas west of the Newell Highway.

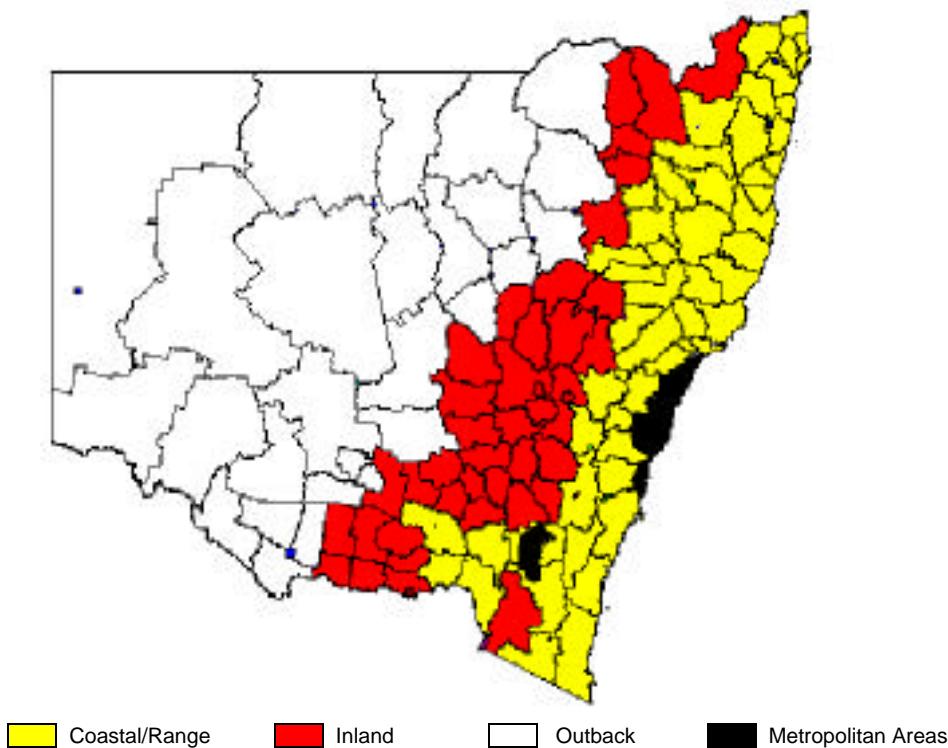
The data were initially grouped into these three areas and then split into small or large properties. The split was defined using the median for total property area, stock types and cropping types. This produced a six-fold typology of operation size: a large and small operation for the coastal/range, central, and outback areas.

All but one property could be categorised into this typology. The groups produced are as follows:

- Coastal/range large (N=77).
- Coastal/range small (N=84).
- Middle large (N=50).
- Middle small (N=82).
- Outback large (N=26).
- **Outback small (N=73).**
- Total large farms (N=153)
- Total small farms (N=239)

Once this typology of farm size was developed, it was then possible to measure their respective levels and types of farm crime experienced. Variations in crime prevention strategies employed were also assessed:

- Outback (N=99)
- Inland (N=132)
- Coastal/range (N=161)



**Figure 4.1: Map of local government areas grouped according to geographical location.**

### **4.3.2 Statistical analyses**

Data analysis was performed using the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSSx). To examine the extent and patterns in property crime against farm, we employed geographic information system technology (GIS) combined with a range of chi square analyses. Only non-parametric statistical analyses were employed as most variables were highly skewed or were of a binary nature.

## **4.4 THE INTERVIEWS**

In the course of the project, over 80 telephone interviews were conducted.

### **4.4.1 Interviews with farmers**

The initial mail out of the survey included a letter inviting farmers to participate in a telephone interview to discuss the issues in greater depth. Twenty respondents volunteered to participate in a telephone interview. In response to media attention to the survey, a further twenty farmers contacted us to relate their experiences of crime. The interviews allowed participants to elaborate upon their experiences of crime and what lengths they had taken to prevent further victimisation on their properties. We gathered information on farmers' experiences of reporting crimes to police and the ramifications of their victimisation both personally and professionally. We asked how the experience affected their relationship with their neighbours and others within their community and whether they had discussed their problems with others. The interviews also sought participant's ideas on possible solutions to agricultural crime and what type of information would assist farmers in crime prevention on farm.

The authors also met with approximately 30 farmers in central New South Wales who met to form a Rural Watch group in response to increasing incidences of stock theft in their region. A workshop to discuss crime prevention strategies on farms was held at the local Armidale Saleyards with approximately thirty farmers from the district in attendance. Professor Donnermeyer conducted the workshop during his visit to Australia. The information gathered from this workshop was used to develop a crime prevention package for farmers to be released in conjunction with the report on the findings of this study.

### **4.4.2 Interviews with police officers**

Permission was sought from NSW Police to conduct telephone interviews with police officers from various Local Area Commands (LACs) across diverse agricultural regions throughout rural New South Wales. Letters introducing the study were sent to the commanders of each LAC inviting them to participate in the study. A relevant officer from each LAC was then interviewed by telephone

to assess the extent and nature of crime on farms in their locality. The authors conducted some face-to-face interviews during visits to some areas.

The interviews explored officers' views on the extent and type of agricultural crime in their locality, the problems they faced in policing such crimes and what improvements they would like to see within the agricultural industry to reduce the incidence of property crime.

#### **4.4.3 Interviews with various other professionals**

Telephone interviews were also conducted with various professionals who also had knowledge on local crime and security issues. These included country magistrates, lawyers, NSW Department of Agriculture livestock officers, stock and station agents, saleyard managers, representatives of farmer organisations and insurers of farm stock and equipment. Information was sought to clarify specific issues that had emerged in the course of the research. We also sought these professionals' opinions on the problem of agricultural crime and where improvements could be made within the industry, in the legislation and in the policing of this type of crime.

### **4.4 SUMMARY**

This chapter provided an overview of the methods by which the self-report mail survey of farmers across New South Wales was conducted, the interviews and workshops were held with farmers, and the way interviews were conducted with Police and various professionals within the agricultural industries. The method by which a typology of farm operations was devised based upon size, operation type and geographical location was described. This typology provided the unit of analysis for the examination of the survey data. The following chapters present an overview of the findings of the analysis of the data collected by these methods.

# Chapter Five

## Profile of the Sample

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a profile of the respondents to the survey and the properties included in the analysis is presented. The properties within the sample are classified according to size, geographical location, and the principal type of commercial agricultural production employed. The characteristics of the respondents and their properties are then compared across the six types of farms.

#### 5.1.1 Farm operators

The main survey sample of 393 respondents included 309 males and 84 females. Their ages ranged between 26 and 87 years (Mean 56 yrs, SD 13.26 yrs). As the average age for farmers in Australia is 55 years (ABARE, 2000), these results suggest that the sample reflects an accurate cross-section of farmers in New South Wales. There was little variation in age across the six types of farm size (see Table 5.1). Respondents had been farming as an adult for an average of 33 years (SD 15.26). The majority (47%) had lived in their district between 20 and 50 years, while 30% had been there most of their lives or 50 years or more. Only nine farmers (2%) were relative newcomers to the district (less than three years). The majority (64%) had other family living within the district. However the sample was evenly divided on the proportion who were on properties previously owned by relatives.

A comparison of these demographic factors across the six farm types found there were significantly more female operators on smaller properties than larger ones ( $\chi^2=4.19$ ,  $p<0.04$ ). Significantly more small farms than large farms were previously owned by family members ( $\chi^2=6.99$ ,  $p<0.008$ ). Table 5.1 displays the demographic features for each farm type across the three geographical regions.

**Table 5.1:**  
**Demographic features across six farm types (N=393).**

Farm size by region	Male operators (%)	Age Mean (SD)	Number of years farming Mean (SD)	Lived in district over 20 yrs (%)	Property previously owned by family (%)	Other family in district (%)
<b>Coastal/Range</b>						
Large (N=77)	81.6	56.99 (13.89)	35.59 (14.57)	82.9	56.6	67.6
Small (N=84)	65.9	55.19 (13.18)	27.30 (16.11)	59.8	30.1	57.3
<b>Inland</b>						
Large (N=50)	84.0	53.26 (12.81)	34.08 (14.85)	80.0	62.0	72.0
Small (N=82)	86.6	59.24 (12.30)	34.49 (15.19)	80.5	43.9	56.1
<b>Outback</b>						
Large (N=26)	92.3	51.15 (12.96)	31.31 (12.71)	84.6	46.2	73.1
Small (N=73)	74.0	56.27 (13.51)	34.51 (14.89)	83.6	56.2	69.9
<b>Large Farms</b>						
(N=153)	84.2	54.73 (13.5)	34.36 (14.36)	82.3	56.6	70.0
<b>Small Farms</b>						
(N=239)	75.5*	56.88 (13.06)	32.01 (15.73)	74.2	42.9**	64.2
<b>Total</b>						
(N=393)	79.0	56.0 (13.26)	33.0 (15.26)	77.0	48.1	64.2

\*all reported  $\chi^2$  values are statistically significant at 0.05

\*\*all reported  $\chi^2$  values are statistically significant at 0.01

## 5.2 FARM OPERATIONS

### 5.2.1 Property size

The size of the properties ranged from 1.6 hectares through to 80,940 hectares. The mean was 4331 hectares (SD 10,398 ha). Table 5.2 displays the varying types of land tenure arrangements across the six farm types.

**Table 5.2:**  
**Land tenure types across the six farm sizes (N=393).**

Farm size by region	Total hectares	Freehold	Crown lease	Lease	Agistment	Share farm
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
<b>Coastal/Range</b>						
Large (N=77)	2319.67 (2816.31)	2214.68 (2867.1)	980.62 (1070.47)	356.89 (283.38)	600 (781.03)	Nil
Small (N=84)	206.06 (309.57)	203.31 (317.59)	57.84 (499.32)	37.51 (1859.00)	60.95 (47.89)	34.2 (35.77)
<b>Inland</b>						
Large (N=50)	3939.9 (4082.93)	3440.4 (3276.87)	2296.1 (4386.78)	1558.5 (2715.36)	Nil	716.32 (417.8)
Small (N=82)	504.48 (355.19)	479.62 (333.77)	445.44 (461.88)	247.25 (156.47)	22.59 (257.55)	110.71 (15.13)
<b>Outback</b>						
Large (N=26)	36384.67 (18254.59)	14927.98 (10664.43)	36329.96 (18476.07)	15580.95 (20890.13)	1315.25 (1001.62)	Nil
Small (N=73)	4123.97 (5676.72)	2792.62 (2641.57)	6696.97 (10371.32)	594.89 (587.13)	137 (159.82)	Nil
<b>Large Farms</b>						
(N=153)	8637.98 (14943.92)	3622.16 (5197.24)	20250.99 (22198.21)	2947.5 (7810.34)	886.1 (842.19)	716.32 (417.8)
<b>Small Farms</b>						
(N= 239)	1506.69 (3590.38)	1054.47 (1830.32)	4649.97 (9001.79)	218.01 (351.35)	113.77 (132.17)	72.45 (49.54)
<b>TOTAL</b>						
(N=392)	4,330.86 (10,398)	1937.39 (2907.21)	14328.31 (20736.91)	2129.88 (6670.93)	443.48 (787.05)	324.49 (416.14)

Freehold tenure was common to all regions. However, the geographical location was clearly related to the other types of tenure held. Lease type arrangements are most common in the outback regions particularly for large holdings. Respondents on large outback properties placed stock on agistment more often. Large coastal/range properties also had stock on agistment. Share farming was more common in inland areas.

### 5.2.2 Commercial agricultural production

The most common form of agricultural enterprise was mixed farming (51.8%). Only 5.4% were cropping only enterprises while the remainder were livestock only (42.8%). The majority of respondents (72.8%) received the largest proportion of their total net income (over 85%) from farming. Nine per cent had

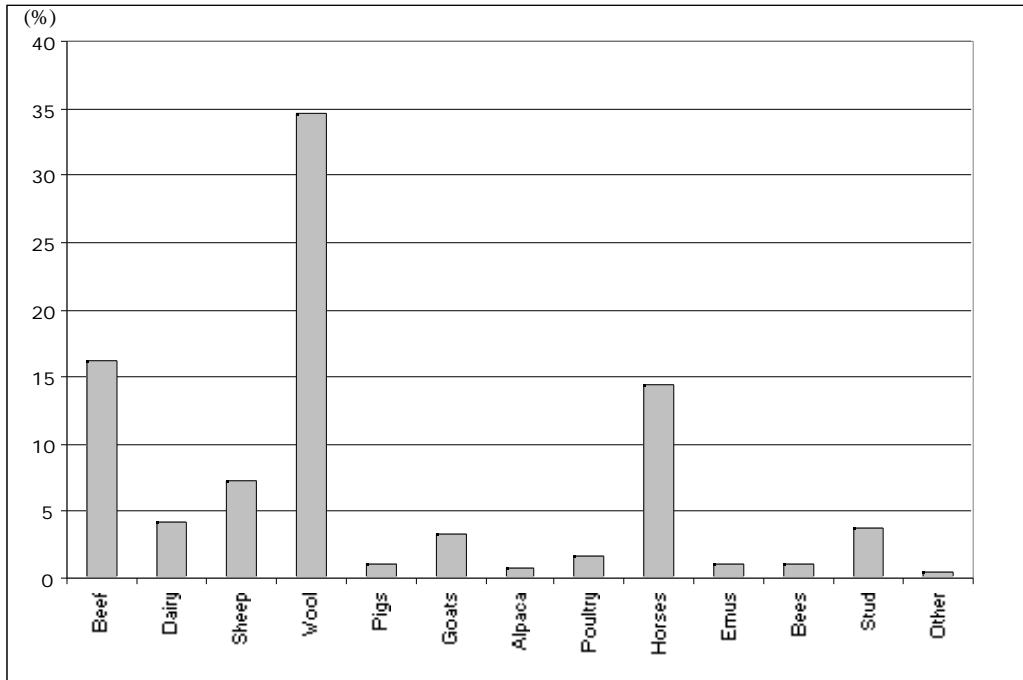
between 50% to 85% of their income from agriculture while 18% received less than half of their total income from farming. The majority of farm businesses (56%) were family partnerships, 22% were private or family companies while 15% were sole operations. The remainder comprised public companies, family trusts or other types of partnerships. Table 5.3 displays the differences in agricultural enterprises across the six farm types.

**Table 5.3:**  
**Commercial agricultural production across the size farm types (N=393).**

Farm size by region	Cropping and mixed farming (%)	Livestock only (%)	More than 85% of net income from farming (%)	Proportion of family farm partnerships (%)
<b>Coastal/Range</b>				
Large (N=77)	36.4	63.6	77.6	57.1
Small (N=84)	34.9	65.1	43.2	44.6
<b>Inland</b>				
Large (N=50)	93.9	6.1	91.8	58.0
Small (N=82)	65.0	35.0	66.7	62.5
<b>Outback</b>				
Large (N=26)	34.6	65.4	96.2	46.2
Small (N=73)	80.6	19.4	87.5	67.1
<b>Large Farms</b>				
(N=153)	54.6	45.4	85.4	55.6
<b>Small Farms</b>				
(N= 239)	59.1	40.9	65.0	57.6
<b>TOTAL</b>				
(N=392)	57.2	42.8	72.8	56.7

### 5.2.3 Livestock

Of the combined sample of 620 respondents, 94% owned livestock. New South Wales has the largest sheep population of all states in Australia and the sample reflects that fact with 7% in sheep meat production and 35% producing wool. Sixteen per cent produced beef and 14% of properties owned horses or were primarily engaged in running thoroughbred horse studs or resting paddocks. Figure 5.1 displays the proportions of various types of livestock within the whole sample.



**Figure 5.1: Livestock types (N=620).**

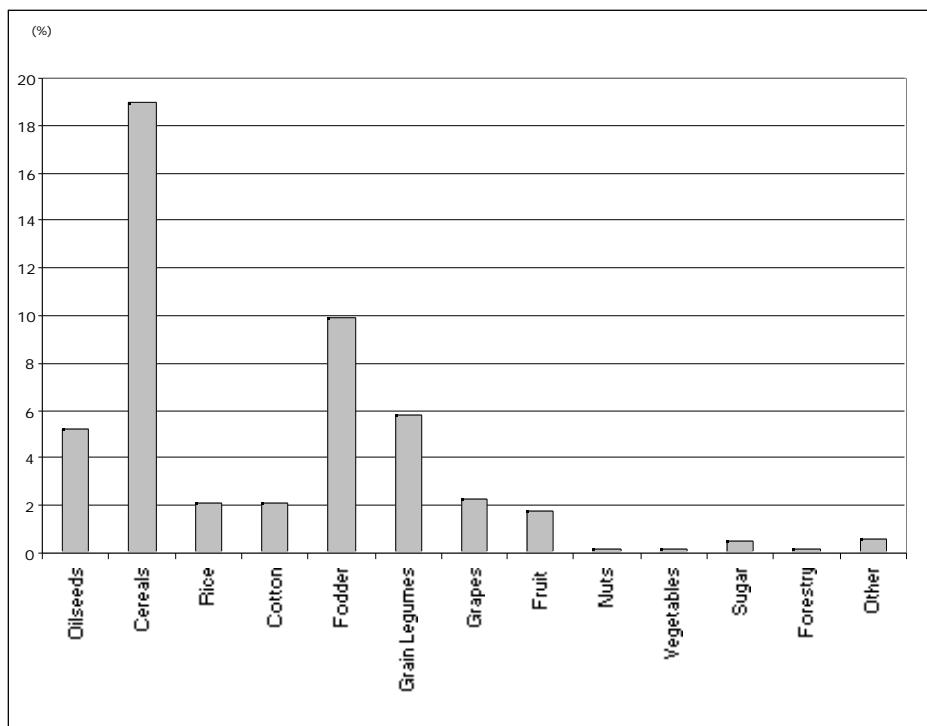
Table 5.4 displays the mean number of stock by type across the six farm sizes by geographical region. Large outback properties were more likely to be sheep properties. Both small and large outback properties had the greater proportion of goats reflecting the growing recognition of the lucrative market in feral goats. The larger beef cattle properties were those in the coastal/range region. Poultry farms were typical of small coastal/range properties. Other types of livestock included alpacas, emus, horse studs and stables, bees and pigs. These were more common in large inland properties.

#### 5.2.4 Cropping

The most common type of cropping enterprise within the whole sample was cereals (19%). This was followed by fodder crops (10%), grain legumes (6%) and oilseeds (5%). Figure 5.2 presents the proportions of cropping production across the total sample (N=620).

**Table 5.4:****Mean stock numbers across farm types (N=393).**

Farm size by region	Cattle/ Dairy Mean (SD)	Sheep/ Wool Mean (SD)	Goats Mean (SD)	Poultry Mean (SD)	Other Mean (SD)
<b>Coastal/Range</b>					
Large (N=77)	1037.14 (2103.79)	6288.5 (7466.16)	93.33 (92.92)	8.5 (2.1)	6.37 (7.73)
Small (N=84)	123.48 (129.32)	559.33 (477.71)	110.44 (149.16)	3583.57 (9443.76)	64.07 (100.07)
<b>Inland</b>					
Large (N=50)	744.2 (687.71)	5504.9 (4188.44)	400 (Nil)	55.0 (63.64)	523.67 (1487.73)
Small (N=82)	167.29 (231.79)	1817.4 (1392.28)	133.33 (113.73)	30.5 (46.38)	31.81 (39.78)
<b>Outback</b>					
Large (N=26)	429.05 (336.7)	12304.17 (7512.22)	2666.67 (1966.38)	56.0 (62.23)	78.71 (187.58)
Small (N=73)	345.4 (369.16)	3768.5 (3456.07)	2142.86 (3103.15)	Ni	18.86 (17.15)
<b>Large Farms</b>					
(N=153)	856.58 (1622.39)	7278.2 (7000.84)	1688.0 (1954.52)	39.83 (46.63)	207.98 (916.29)
<b>Small Farms</b>					
(N= 239)	205.03 (270.65)	2540.72 (2720.51)	862.84 (2056.72)	2291.6 (7231.59)	46.63 (77.07)
<b>TOTAL</b>					
(N=393)	508.63 (1170.14)	4919.8 (5814.59)	1140.48 (2024.58)	1496.82 (6056.73)	120.15 (596.66)



**Figure 5.2: Cropping enterprises across the whole sample (N=620).**

A comparison of cropping enterprises across the six farm types revealed that oilseeds and grain legumes were more often grown on large coastal/range properties (Table 5.5). Cereal production was more common in large inland and outback farms. Rice production was not well represented in the sample with the only reported area under production occurring on large outback farms.

The majority of cotton growing occurs on large properties in the western regions of the State, and the sample reflected this fact. Fodder crops were more common on small outback farms. Other crops included fruit and nuts, grapes, vegetables, sugar cane and forestry. These were more common to large inland properties.

## 5.3 FARM ECOLOGY

### 5.3.1 Farm layout

The most common type of farm layout within the sample was a single block of land with a house and farm buildings located on the block. This type of set up was reported 154 (39%) of respondents. This finding may reflect the large proportion of small acreage properties within the sample. This type of farm layout has some advantages for maintaining security on-farm because it allows for closer surveillance and protection of farm property. An additional 126 (32%) properties consisted of a single block of land with a house and farm buildings with one or more adjoining blocks.

**Table 5.5:****Mean number of hectares of crop types across the farm types (N=393).**

Farm size by region	Oilseeds Mean ha (SD)	Cereals Mean ha (SD)	Rice Mean ha (SD)	Cotton Mean ha (SD)	Fodder Mean ha (SD)	Legumes Mean ha (SD)	Other Crops Mean ha (SD)
<b>Coastal/Range</b>							
Large (N=77)	650.5 (1042.14)	878.33 (2449.82)	Nil	60.71	106.4 (129.47)	367 (550.42)	134.91 (152.62)
Small (N=84)	43.04 (52.28)	114.4 (51.3)	Nil	Nil	33.38 (29.2)	Nil	44.85 (95.22)
<b>Inland</b>							
Large (N=50)	366.05 (616.78)	1197.69 (1909.97)	98.8 (59.17)	595.48 (686.7)	178.21 (234.01)	235.52 (276.26)	410 (Nil)
Small (N=82)	61.8 (29.87)	189.2 (123.68)	31.0 (24.13)	140.4 (225.02)	63.03 (94.04)	84.28 (31.9)	46.76 (70.78)
<b>Outback</b>							
Large (N=26)	161.89 (Nil)	1474.73 (1231.38)	400 (Nil)	1361.75 (661.75)	40.47 (Nil)	300.78 (98.83)	Nil
Small (N=73)	318.82 (471.63)	642.98 (605.21)	129.73 (65.7)	671.36 (809.53)	217.24 (372.34)	147.22 (152.79)	61.85 (45.39)
<b>Large Farms</b>							
(N=153)	424.06 (708.72)	1159.2 (1960.78)	174.1 (158.16)	695.25 (237.25)	136.89 (186.36)	270.24 (299.25)	226.61 (192.01)
<b>Small Farms</b>							
(N=239)	163.16 (317.53)	452.66 (520.38)	103.3 (72.46)	557.59 (750.34)	94.25 (208.02)	124.74 (125.13)	47.63 (80.78)
<b>TOTAL</b>							
(N=393)	282.26 (542.47)	762.63 (1395.57)	118.29 (95.55)	614.95 (737.08)	113.41 (198.3)	204.53 (244.88)	62.97 (103.45)

Almost 17% consisted of one or more unoccupied blocks of land. The remaining 9% reported two or more separate blocks or properties. These last two categories of farm layouts are more vulnerable to crime because much of the land is left unattended.

A significant difference was found between large and small properties on farm layout ( $\chi^2=24.18$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ) (See Table 5.6). Smaller properties were more likely to feature a single block with farmhouse and buildings. Larger properties were more likely to consist of two or more separate properties. When comparisons were made across the six farm types, there were also significant differences ( $\chi^2=42.81$ ,  $p<0.002$ ). Smaller properties in coastal/range areas were more likely to have single blocks of land with a house and sheds.

**Table 5.6:****Farm layout across the farm types (N=393).**

Farms size and region	Farm Layout				
	Single block with house and sheds (%)	Single house/shed block-with adjoining blocks (%)	Single house/shed block- with non-adjoining blocks (%)	One or more blocks non-adjoining without house or sheds (%)	Two or more separate Properties (%)
<b>Coastal/Range</b>					
Large (N=77)	15.6	17.6	26.2**	16.7	33.3**
Small (N=84)	30.5**	20.0	9.2	25.0	8.3
<b>Inland</b>					
Large (N=50)	6.5	13.6	18.5	16.7	25.0
Small (N=82)	24.7	18.4	18.5	16.7	19.4
<b>Outback</b>					
Large (N=26)	3.9	10.4	4.6	16.7	5.6
Small (N=73)	18.8	20.0	23.1	8.3	8.3
<b>Large Farms</b>					
(N=153)	26.0	41.6	49.2	50.0	63.9**
<b>Small Farms</b>					
(N=239)	74.0**	58.4	50.8	50.0	36.1
<b>TOTAL</b>					
<b>(N=393)</b>	<b>39.3</b>	<b>31.9</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>9.2</b>

\*\*all reported  $\chi^2$  values are statistically significant at 0.01

Small outback properties and small coastal/range properties were more likely to have additional blocks of land adjoining the main block. Large coastal/range farms were more likely to have a single block with one or more non- adjoining blocks or two or more separate properties.

### 5.3.2 Surveillance

One factor influencing a farmer's vulnerability to crime is the visibility of farm buildings and sheds to the residence. The majority (92%) of properties have someone living on the land. Half (52%) of those who had other blocks or a separate property had someone living on-site. There were no significant differences between small or large properties or between regions regarding this factor. Just over half (58.4%) reported that all of the farm sheds and buildings were in sight of the farm residence. A further 32% reported that about half of the farm buildings were visible from the main house. Nine per cent reported no visibility.

There was a significant difference between the farm sizes on visibility with smaller farms more likely to have the farm sheds and buildings in sight from the farm residence ( $\chi^2=8.46$ ,  $p<0.02$ ). Smaller coastal/range and inland properties were significantly more likely to have visibility between the farmhouse and sheds ( $\chi^2=26.42$ ,  $p<0.003$ ). Only 29.6% of second blocks or properties have farm sheds and buildings in sight of a farmhouse. The majority (47%) had no visibility. No significant differences were found between the farm sizes or regions regarding visibility on second blocks.

### **5.3.3 Proximity of the property to public roads**

Another way to look at the potential vulnerability of farms is by their accessibility. Accessibility can increase the vulnerability of farmers to crime because their property and stock can be more easily reached by thieves. There was significant variation between the farm types and region by the proximity of the property to public roads or highways and distance from an urban centre. There was a significant difference between farm sizes on the distance from the property to town with larger farms located further from towns than smaller farms ( $\chi^2=22.51$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). There were also significant differences between the farm types and distance to town ( $\chi^2=115.8$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). Larger outback properties were significantly further from a town centre than other farm types. Smaller coastal/range farms were located closer to town.

Respondents with two properties were more likely to be smaller farms with their second block located within 10 km from town ( $\chi^2=41.45$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). This type of farm layout was more common in inland and coastal/range regions. The majority of properties within the sample (96%) had a public road less than 10 km from their boundary. Similarly, the majority of those respondents with more than one property (98%) had a public road within 10 km of their second block.

Smaller farms were significantly more likely to be located closer to a highway than were larger farms ( $\chi^2=10.98$ ,  $p<0.02$ ). There was also a significant difference between the farm types on distance to a highway, with more smaller farms in coastal/range and inland farms being closer to a highway ( $\chi^2=74.68$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). Likewise, smaller farms in inland or coastal/range regions were significantly more likely to have secondary properties closer to a highway ( $\chi^2=22.13$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). Table 5.7 presents the ecological profiles of the six farm types.

### **5.3.4 Terrain and cover**

Farmers were asked to describe the terrain of their property and the type of vegetation that predominated on the land. Terrain and cover influence the ability of farmers to maintain surveillance of their property and stock. Respondents provided a variety of descriptions. These responses were then categorised according to whether the terrain was flat, undulating or hilly and whether the vegetation cover was low, medium or dense. These categories were the most

common types of descriptions within the sample. There was a significant difference between the farm types on these characteristics largely due to the geographical location of the properties. Large farms were more likely to have hilly terrain than small properties while undulating country was more characteristic of small farms ( $\chi^2=15.37$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

**Table 5.7:**  
**Ecological profiles of the six farm types (N=393).**

	People living on property	Farm sheds all insight of house	From town to main property	From public road to main property	From Highway to main property
Farms size and region	(%)	(%)	Mean distance (km) (SD)	Mean distance (km) (SD)	Mean distance (km) (SD)
<b>Coastal/Range</b>					
Large (N=77)	90.9	59.2	25.42 (16.88)	1.53 (2.93)	17.80 (16.31)
Small (N=84)	90.5	65.9	13.51 (11.55)	0.50 (1.13)	8.31 (11.30)**
<b>Inland</b>					
Large (N=50)	98.0	46.0	29.62 (27.51)	1.63 (3.29)	12.91 (16.09)
Small (N=82)	93.8	70.4**	19.28 (18.64)	1.03 (1.55)	9.21 (11.35)**
<b>Outback</b>					
Large (N=26)	88.5	26.9	76.96	12.49 (39.00)	57.19 (71.48)
Small (N=73)	91.8	55.6	(66.78)**	4.58 (9.78)	20.97 (26.50)
<b>Large Farms</b>					
(N=153)	92.8	49.3	35.55 (38.43)**	3.42 (16.58)	22.89 (36.11)
<b>Small Farms</b>					
(N=239)	92.0	64.3*	21.36 (20.91)	1.92 (5.78)	12.49 (18.24)*
<b>TOTAL</b>					
<b>(N=393)</b>	<b>92.3</b>	<b>58.4</b>	<b>27.2 (1.5)</b>	<b>4.6 (1.01)</b>	<b>21.2 (1.66)</b>

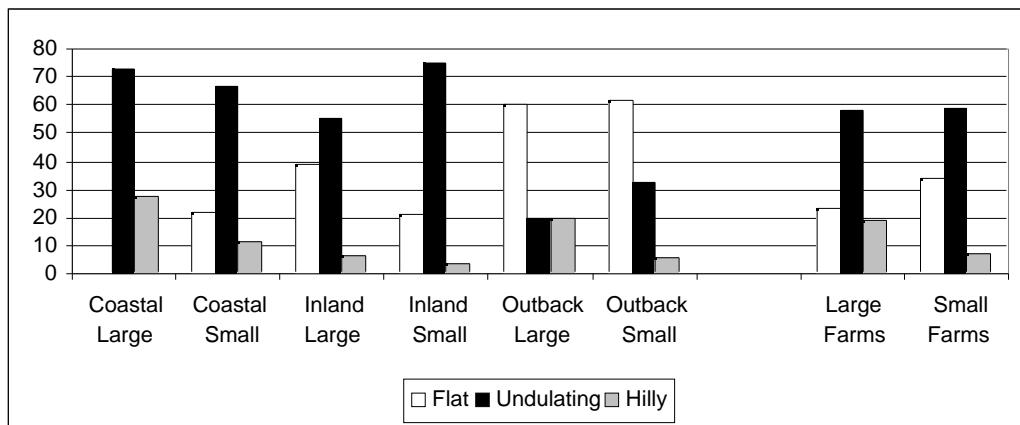
\*all reported  $\chi^2$  values are statistically significant at 0.05

\*\*all reported  $\chi^2$  values are statistically significant at 0.01

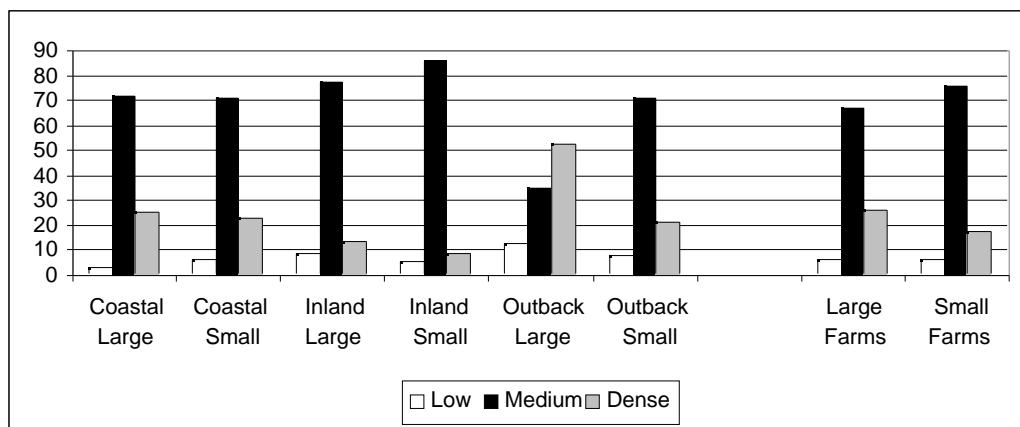
Large and small outback properties had significantly more flat ground than other areas ( $\chi^2=105.82$ ,  $p<0.00001$ ). Over 61% of farmers from the outback region of New South Wales described the terrain as flat. Farmers from the coastal/range (71.4%) and middle regions (68.0%) were more likely to describe the terrain on which their operations are located as undulating. However, one-fifth of small farmers from the coastal region described the terrain as flat, compared to none of the larger, coastal/range farmers.

The majority of farmers described their farms as having medium cover particularly those farmers in the coastal/range and middle regions. Only 35% of large outback farmers said that their farms had medium cover. Differences in descriptions of cover by size the operation were minimal, although larger farmers were more likely to describe their operations as having dense cover. This was

especially true of farmers from the outback region. Figures 5.3 and 5.4 display the various types of terrain and cover on each of the various farm types.



**Figure 5.3: Types of terrain across the six farm types (N=393).**



**Figure 5.4: Types of vegetation cover across the six farm types (N=393).**

## 5.4 SUMMARY

This chapter described the characteristics of the respondents to the survey and of their properties. The properties within the sample were classified according to size, geographical location, and the principal type of commercial agricultural production employed. This classification was then used to illustrate other characteristics of the properties such as the type of land tenure, the types of livestock carried and cropping enterprise. The layout of the property and other ecological factors that impact upon the ability of respondents to maintain surveillance and security over their property were compared. The following four chapters present the results of the study of farm crime victimisation using the six categories of properties as the principle unit of analysis.

# **Chapter Six**

## **Victimisation**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the actual experiences of farmers with crime on their properties are summarised. The results are compared by farm type and geographical region. Victimization that occurred within the past two years is examined against victimisation occurring over the participants' lifetime of farming. The reasons farmers fail to report crimes on farms are also explored.

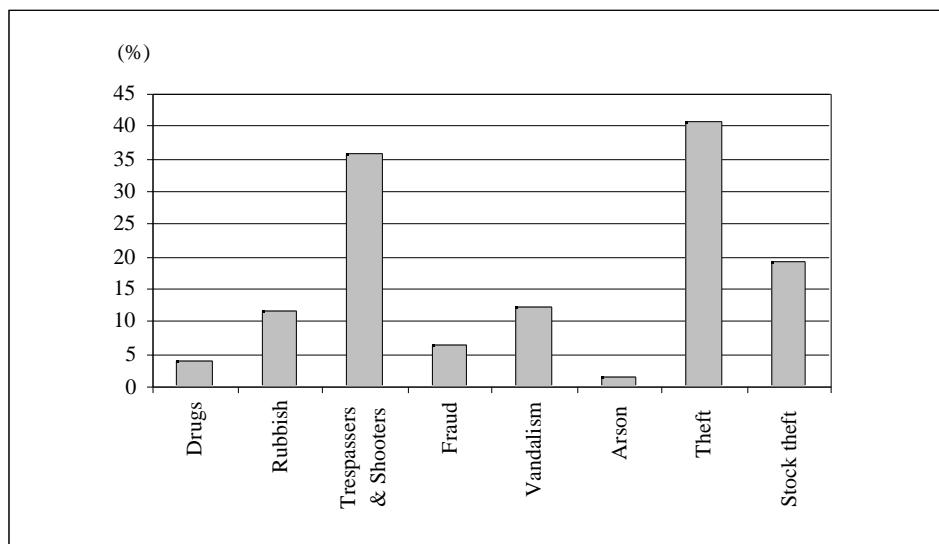
### **6.2 OVERVIEW OF VICTIMISATION**

#### **6.2.1 Incidences of crime**

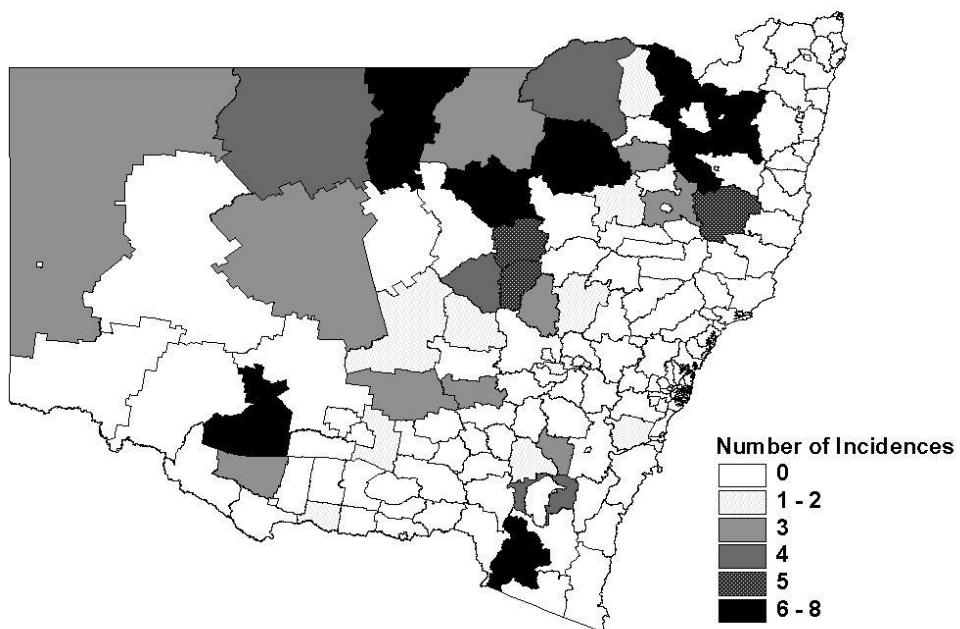
Of the total sample of 620 respondents, 69% reported experiencing some type of property crime. Within the main survey sample of 393 respondents, 78% were victims of property crime. Of these, 87% reported a crime occurring in the past two years. Of those who responded to the close of survey form, 54% also reported experiencing a crime in the past two years. Figure 6.1 displays the proportion of reported criminal incidences occurring in the previous two years across the whole sample (N=620).

#### **6.2.2 Mapping crime**

Using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) technology, the data were mapped by the location of farms where incidents occurred within Local Government Areas (LGA's) across New South Wales. The greater numbers of stock theft incidents were reported by respondents located in LGAs in the north of the State along the Queensland border (See Figure 6.2).



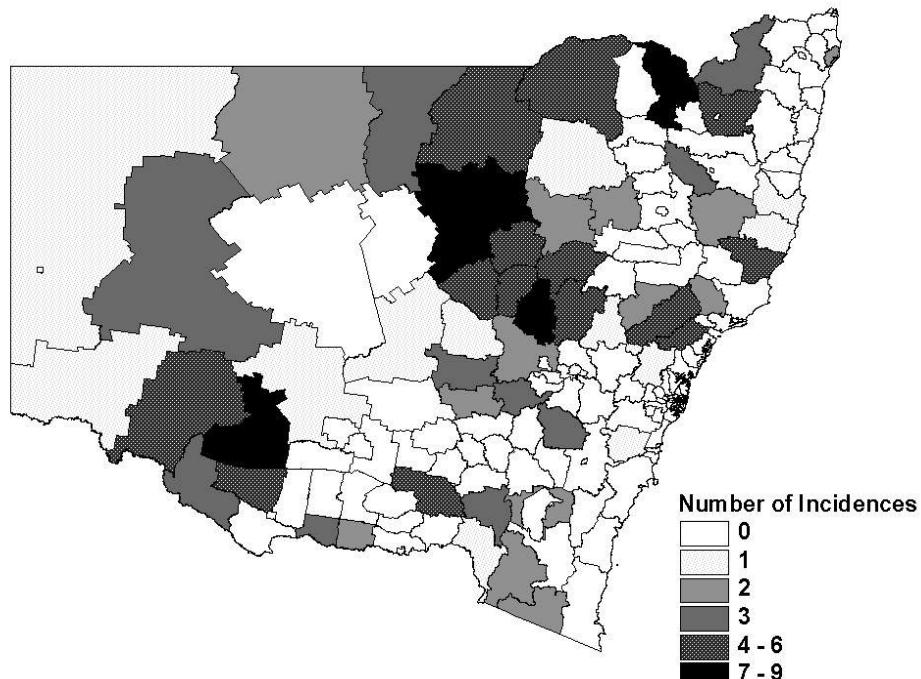
**Figure 6.1: Property crime victimisation over previous two years (N=620).**



**Figure 6.2: Reported livestock thefts over the previous two years (N=620).**

According to police we subsequently interviewed, it is often the case that stolen stock from New South Wales are disposed of at abattoirs, saleyards and feedlots located just over the border in southern Queensland. The location of reported thefts reflect those presented in the map of official recorded data on livestock theft for 2000 in Chapter Two. Those areas that experience the highest rates are the heavily timbered high country of the Snowy Mountains and the New England area. However, high rates of livestock theft were also reported in areas that are flat, have little vegetation but are isolated, such as Hay.

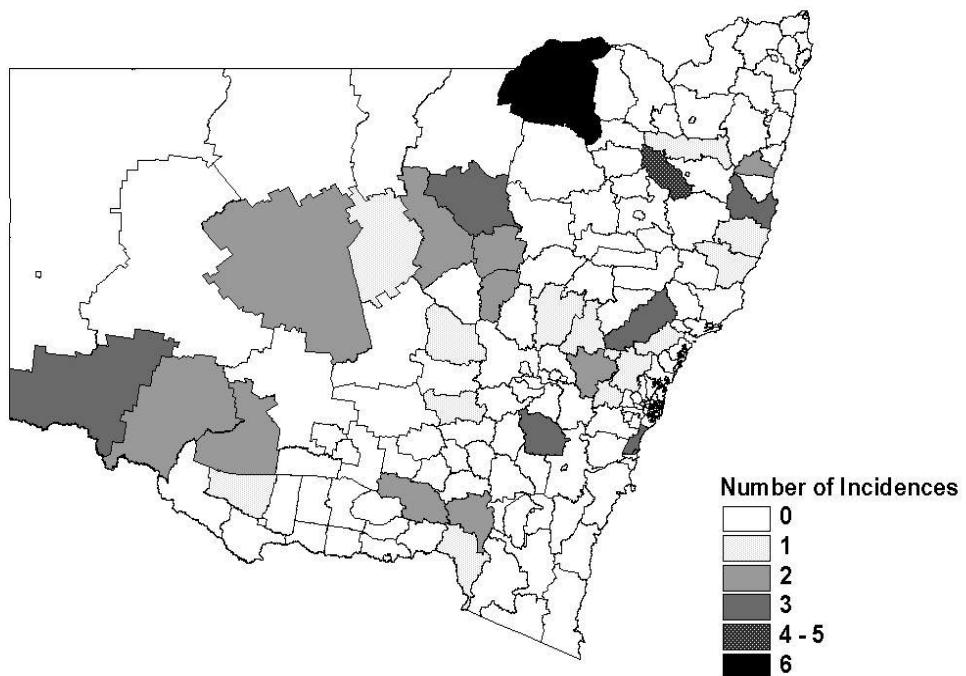
Other crimes, such as the theft of tools and fuel were widespread across the State. Those communities with the greatest number of reported thefts were located in the north and central west of the state, particularly communities in the Dubbo region such as Coonamble, Warren, and Wellington. These areas typically record higher rates of break and enter crimes in official recorded crime data for New South Wales. Figure 6.3 displays the location of reported thefts.



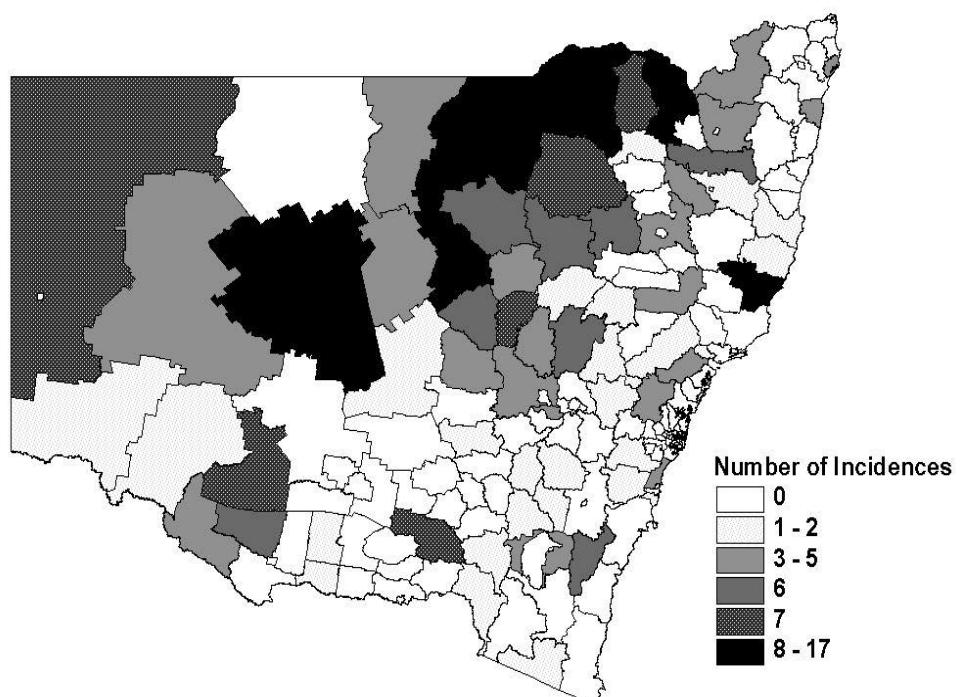
**Figure 6.3: Reported thefts of tools, equipment, small machinery and fuel over the past two years (N=620).**

Malicious damage appears to be prevalent in clusters of LGAs. The largest numbers of reports were in Moree in the northwest (See Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.5 shows that illegal trespassers and shooters were a widespread problem for respondents, including those located in outback regions, such as the Unincorporated Far West. These far western regions experience significant problems with poachers of feral goats and shooters looking for wild pigs. Interviews conducted in the Deniliquin district in the south west of the state confirmed that the area being only three hours drive from Melbourne did have a problem with illegal shooters looking to shoot 'wild sheep'. Farmers also believe trespassers and shooters are also responsible for theft from farms. The maps reveal some similarities in the location of reported incidences of theft and the reports of trespassers and shooters.



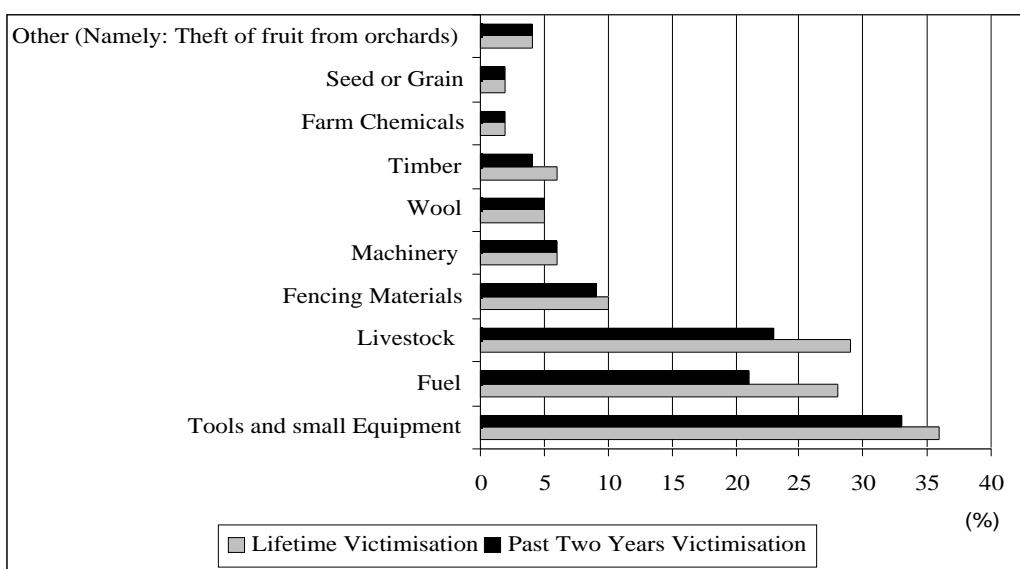
**Figure 6.4: Reported incidences of malicious damage over the past two years (N=620).**



**Figure 6.5: Reported incidences of illegal trespassers and shooters over the past two years (N=620).**

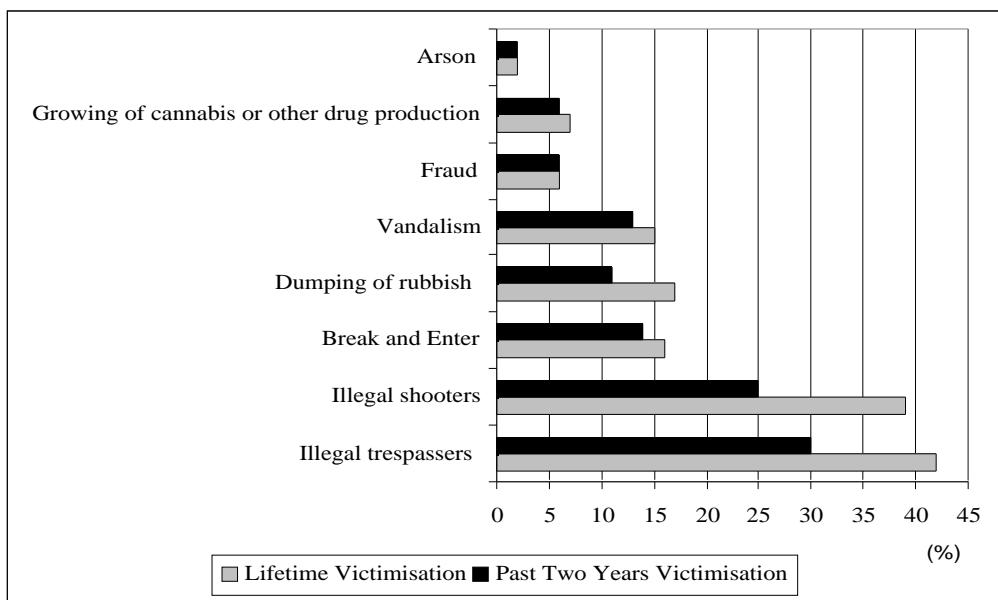
### 6.3 VICTIMISATION OVER LIFETIME AND PAST TWO YEARS

A closer analysis was conducted with the main survey sample of 393. The most common type of theft experienced over the past two years was the theft of tools and other small equipment, with 33% reporting a theft of this type. Stock theft was reported by 23% of respondents while 21% reported the theft of fuel. While individual financial losses were significant, the incidence of stock theft was not as high as the theft of tools and equipment. Figure 6.6 displays the percentages of reported theft over the lifetime of owning the property and during the past two years for the main survey sample (N=363).



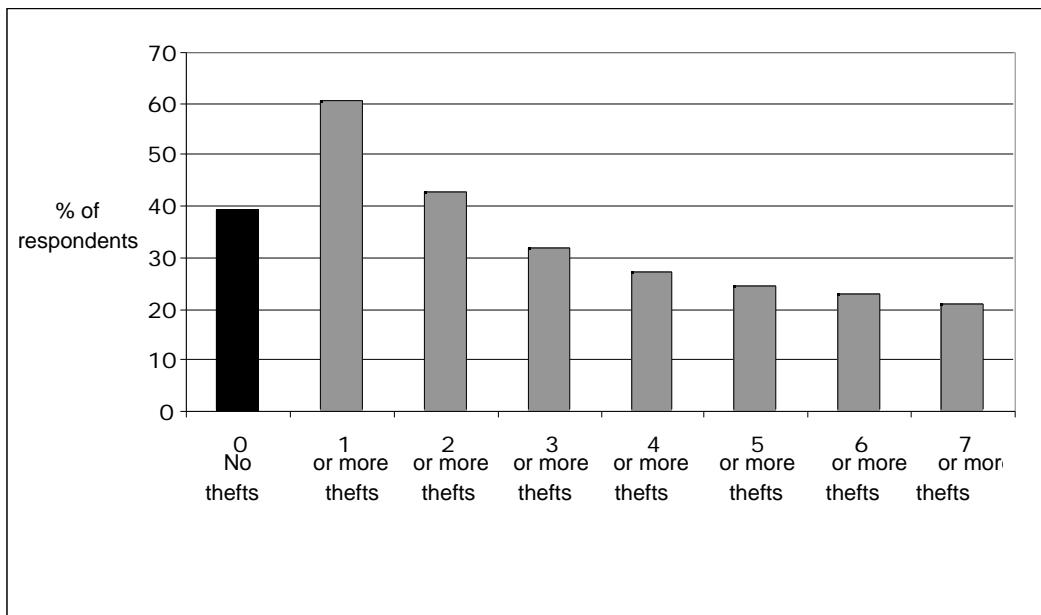
**Figure 6.6: Percentage of reported theft by type for lifetime and past two years (N=363).**

Other crimes experienced over the past two years included break and enter of farm buildings (14%), dumping of rubbish (11%), and vandalism (13%). Six per cent reported discovering cannabis growing illegally on their property. Illegal trespassers (30%) and shooters (25%) were the most common type of crime. Figure 6.7 displays the percentages of reported crime other than theft for the main survey sample. Victimization over the past two years was equal to but not greater than the lifetime experience for all types of crime. However, experience with crime over the long term often impacts upon the opinions and attitudes victims hold about crime and can shape their behaviour regarding crime prevention strategies on farm (Dunkelberger *et al.*, 1992).



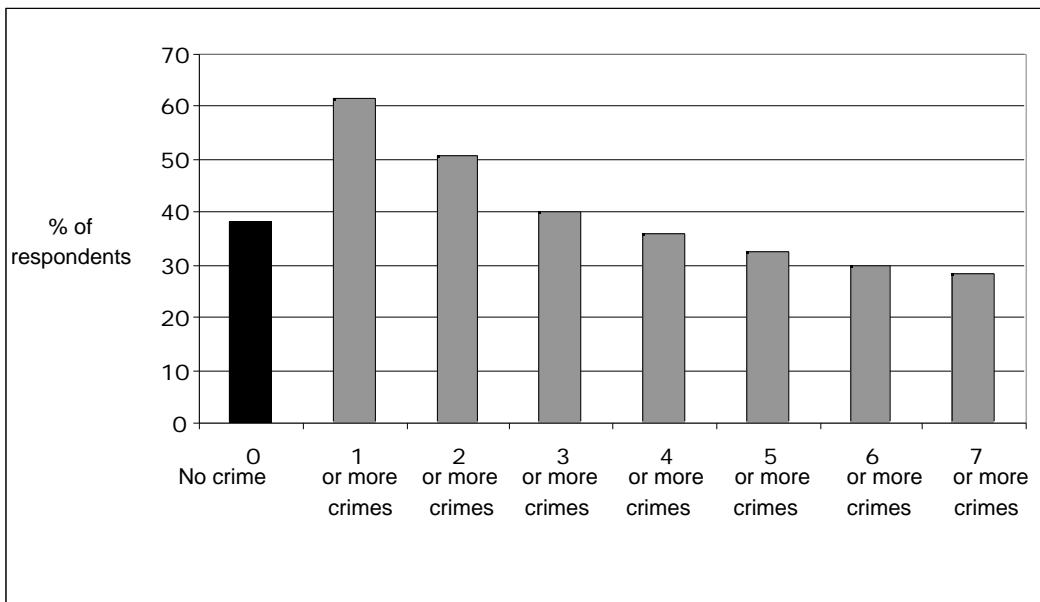
**Figure 6.7: Percentage of reported property crime other than theft for lifetime and past two years (N=363).**

Many respondents reported being victims of several different types of crime and experiencing multiple incidences of the same crime. The following two figures display the proportion of victimisations of thefts and other types of agricultural crime experienced by respondents. Thirty-nine per cent of respondents reported never being a victim of theft during their lifetime of farming. However, 61% reported at least one incident of theft, and 43% reported two or more thefts on their property. The cumulative distribution of the proportion of people who experienced various incidences of thefts is displayed in Figure 6.8.



**Figure 6.8: Experiences of multiple thefts across the sample (N=393).**

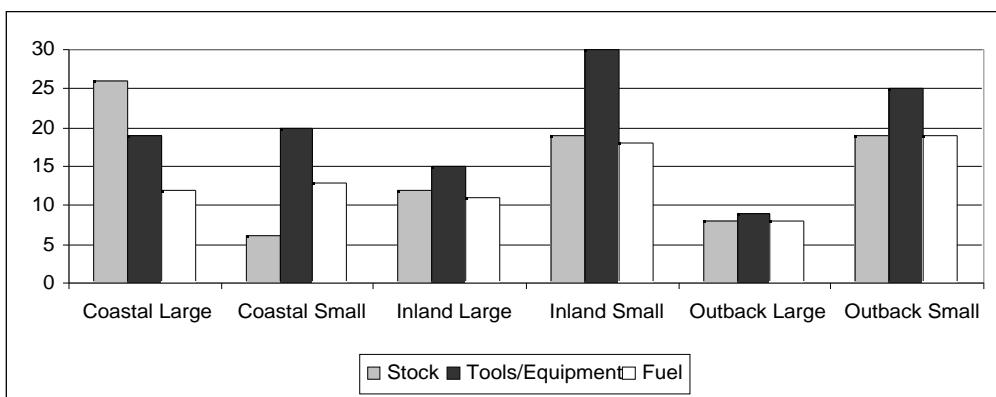
For crimes other than theft, 38% of respondents reported never being victimised, 62% reported one incident, and 51% reported two or more victimisation experiences. Figure 6.9 displays the cumulative distribution of the proportion of people who experienced various incidences of property crime other than theft.



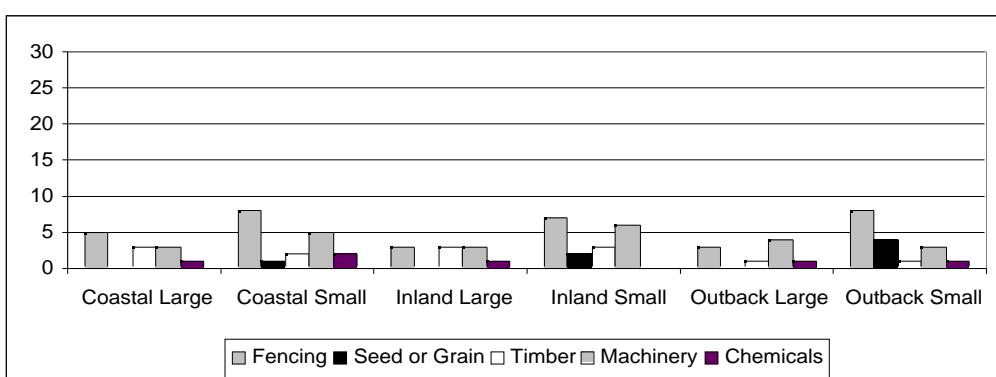
**Figure 6.9: Experiences of multiple property crimes other than theft across the sample (N=393).**

## 6.4 VICTIMISATION ACROSS THE SIX PROPERTY TYPES

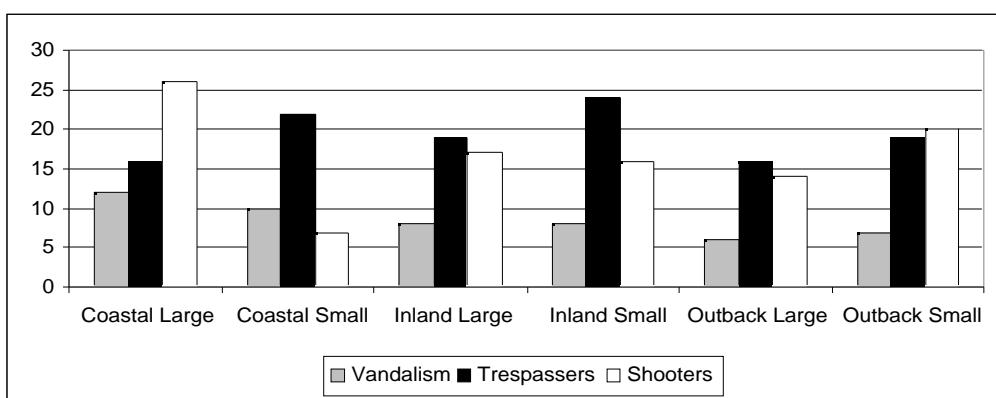
Victimisation over the past two years was compared across the property types. Large farms were significantly more likely to experience livestock theft than were smaller farms ( $\chi^2=7.16$ ,  $p<0.007$ ). Likewise, a significant difference was found between the six farm types and the incidence of reported livestock theft ( $\chi^2=18.28$ ,  $p<0.003$ ). Large coastal/range properties reported more livestock theft than other farm operation types. This supports the findings revealed in the mapping of the data, that the more densely covered mountainous hinterland areas were subject to more livestock theft. No significant difference was found between the farm types regarding other types of theft. Figures 6.10 to 6.14 display the actual number or reported incidences of various crimes across the farm operation sizes.



**Figure 6.11: Reported numbers of thefts over the past two years of stock, tools and equipment and fuel across the farm types (N=393).**

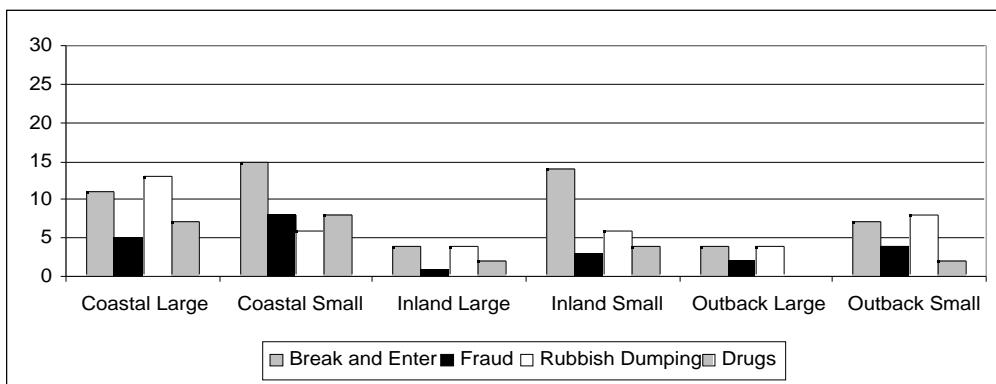


**Figure 6.12: Reported numbers of thefts over the past two years of fencing, grain, timber, machinery or chemicals across the farm types (N=393).**



**Figure 6.13: Reported numbers of malicious damage, trespassers and shooters over the past two years across the farm types (N=393).**

Significant differences were found between the farm types in the incidence of illegal trespassers ( $\chi^2=18.218, p<0.003$ ) and shooters ( $\chi^2=30.376, p<0.0001$ ) but not for malicious damage. Small inland properties experienced the greater number of trespassers. Large coastal/range/range properties reported more shooters and more vandalism than properties in other areas.



**Figure 6.14: Reported numbers of break and enter, fraud, rubbish dumping, and drug production over the past two years across the farm types (N=393).**

No significant differences were found between the property types and other types of crime. However, trends in the data indicate that large coastal/range/range properties experienced more illegal dumping of rubbish. The coastal/range/range areas were more subject to the problem of drug production on farmland.

## 6.5 INDIVIDUAL VICTIMISATION EXPERIENCES

Interviews with farmers who had been victims of crime revealed the extent and impact of various types of crime for individual producers. The following are some of the individual victimisation experiences related by participants.

### 6.5.1 Livestock theft

Reports of stock theft ranged from small numbers of ‘killers’ being taken to large organised thefts. Farmers wrote:

*...I have had animals shot and butchered in the paddock. One chap was caught a few years ago and was put on a good behaviour bond for a few months and had to pay for the beast, but was allowed to keep it.*

*...Taking a neighbour’s stock for household use is very common but losses can mount up. A year’s meat is worth something. BUT if you ever want to prosecute someone in the district for theft you need to have integrity. Therefore it’s not worth it.*

*... We had 24 head of cattle stolen from the property. We got ten back, 14 were killed. Their value was \$9500.*

*... When we ran sheep, all our weaners were stolen or a large percentage was taken, nearly every autumn. So we stopped having sheep.*

## Significant Losses

Peter and Annie have run Asahi Wagyu cattle on their property in the New England area for the past eight years. They estimate they've lost about one hundred thousand dollars worth of stock through repeated thefts over the past six years. Like many others we interviewed, it took some time before they realised that a theft had occurred.

*You can't believe it. You keep checking every paddock and you check all your neighbours and you keep thinking they'll turn up but they don't. It reflects badly on our management ability, you tend to blame yourself and believe you have made a mistake in the counts. You can't afford to lose this amount of cattle. You can't insure for livestock theft.*

In one major theft, they found three fence wires had been cut to allow cattle to jump over. There were signs of disturbance and hoof marks, but no other evidence. Some thefts have occurred in broad daylight. The thieves are bold and nobody questions stock being loaded onto a truck on a property.

*On one occasion, it was late afternoon and very bad weather; it was snowing. I just happened to go outside for wood and saw cattle in a truck and didn't realise that it was our cattle. The calves were just weaned. They were big and sappy and would have brought good prices.*

In one recent incidence, cattle were being drenched and were held in the yards overnight to complete the task the next day. In the morning, they found 16 cows and calves missing. The thieves drove up the main driveway and loaded the stock into the back of a truck without using the loading ramps in the yards. One of Peter and Annie's main concerns is the health issue.

*Those cattle were full of chemical. If one beast is taken to market filled with drench, the ramifications could be enormous. In the US, if they find any contamination, not only is that container usually dumped, but the whole trade is stopped.*

They believe the introduction of a National Livestock Identification scheme using a rumen bolus will go some way to reducing theft. All their stock are tattooed, branded, and ear marked but thieves can change these methods of identification.

They have lost cattle twice a year over the past six years. About the same number go each time; usually a tabletop truckload. Mostly commercial cattle are taken. Calves are usually stolen in March and April and pregnant cows are taken in September. They believe their cattle are easy targets for thieves as the breed is very quiet and are used to being handled frequently. They ensure all their gates are locked and they have placed a security notice on the front fence. They know the person in the district who is stealing their stock but they cannot prove it.

*Everyone knows he does it, as did his father before him who was charged with stealing. The police do not want to know about stock theft if the thief is a neighbour. You can't prove it.*

## **Significant Losses (continued)**

*The conviction rate is very low. Therefore there is no incentive to do anything about it. The police have said we need to catch them in the act - but then what do you do. It's too dangerous. The thieves are very experienced horsemen. They have two to three dogs and I have heard they have their voice box removed. The Police visited the farm on two occasions. They were sympathetic, but took no action due to a lack of concrete evidence.*

**Consequently, they did not bother to report their most recent loss of ten cattle. It has also been hard to convince their neighbours of the seriousness of the problem.**

*We tried to talk to others but nobody wants to discuss it. Their attitude is that this is a dead end road and it won't happen to me. Farmers need to be suspicious and look for clues and maintain records when they find they are losing stock. It could happen to you.*

## **Professional Thieves**

**Mark lost 94 Black Angus cattle valued at in excess of \$62,000 from an unoccupied block that bordered the busy Newell Highway in central New South Wales. The cattle included calves, and cows and heifers in calf. The cattle were earmarked, ear-tagged and some were branded. The gates to the block were locked and chained. The theft occurred overnight with the thieves taking two to three hours to muster the cattle by motorbike and a further hour to load them. It would have required two trips in a double deck semi trailer to move the stock. The yards on the block were not visible from the highway and there were no neighbours in the vicinity. The thieves obviously had knowledge of the property, and had the skills and resources to carry out the theft. Police believe the theft was possibly linked to an earlier theft of 15 head of Black Angus from the saleyards in a neighbouring district.**

Several farmers expressed their concerns over the threat to health regulations through the theft of stock. Concerning fraudulent health declarations, one farmer stated:

*How can somebody who has stolen stock declare them to be free of anything? It is unlikely that thieves will bother about applying for permits to move stock in areas with Johnes Disease.*

One respondent reported on a scam where stolen stock are converted to legal ownership through rorting the system. In one case, a champion horse was stolen in Sydney and impounded in a community outside of the metropolitan area. Although the theft was reported to Sydney Police, there was no link to the horse in the pound. The thief then purchased the unclaimed horse at a very low price as soon as it was put up for sale by the pound. The horse was put on show in Sydney and the owner had no legal possibility of claiming the horse, as a pound sale extinguishes prior ownership. In a similar case, horses that were stolen and impounded were purchased for \$20 each and then sold for \$800.

### **6.5.2 Thefts of tools, machinery and equipment**

The types of tools and equipment reported stolen by respondents included pumps, shearing equipment, horse rugs and saddlery, firearms, small engines, air compressors, welders, farm gates, tarpaulins, oil and fuel drums, grease guns, UHF radios, whipper-snippers, electric drills, chainsaws, angle grinders, and a boat. Items stolen from farm machinery included headlights from headers and tractors, radios and speakers, batteries and energisers, and cultivation points. Wheels and spare parts were taken from vehicles and motorbikes. Machinery stolen included motorbikes and quad runners, bobcats, backhoes, and farm utilities, trucks and cars. One respondent wrote:

*They flog everything from the crowbar to the battery off the tractor. We have lost two motorbikes, a welder, chainsaws, tools and a drench; a total loss of \$10,000. We have locked gates and sheds but it makes no difference.*

Another wrote:

*The farm ute was stolen by illegal shooters whose vehicle had broken down on an adjoining property. They bogged our vehicle but stripped it of tools and the battery to the value of \$500. Our vehicle had been left while we were using a grader to make firebreaks.*

A farmer in the far west of the State reported:

*We have lost tools, motorbike parts, pumps, radios, and tyre levers. It's more an inconvenience than a major loss. When 27 miles from home, it's a long way to walk if you break down and you can't find tools to fix the vehicle. We now have UHF radios, which are invaluable.*

Thefts of fencing materials were reported by 10% of respondents. One reported:

*Fifty fence posts were taken in one incident. The value of the posts was \$10 each and several loads of timber disappeared at \$70 per load.*

Another wrote:

*Electric fence materials worth \$2000 were stolen and batteries were taken from a pump motor.*

There was little chemical theft reported within the sample. One farmer maintained that recent Crop Care and other types of accreditation programs, require chemicals be locked away. Consequently, chemical thefts on farm are declining as more producers participate in such programs.

## **Repeated Thefts**

Robyn and Jeff are part of a long established family farm operation on 55,000 acres in the western region of the state. The property borders a main highway. They currently run 500 cattle and have 6600 acres in cereals, legumes, and fodder crops. They have experienced repeated thefts of diesel fuel, tools, and equipment. There has been at least one theft a year over the past ten years. Recently, they lost about 4000 litres of fuel, two wide tyres and a winch from an auger. Another time, a generator, header lights and UHF radios were taken from farm machinery parked behind two locked gates. The thefts occurred at a site 10 km from the main house and 4km from another house. A caravan outfitted for workers was also broken into. Everything, even the dishes were taken. The thieves have cut fences, cut locks with bolt cutters, and on one occasion, froze a lock with a fire extinguisher and then shattered it.

On another occasion, they lost a water pump located near the river. The offenders rowed down and across river to get the pump. Another time, they found a generator and some tools belonging to a neighbour hidden in scrub. The goods had been taken and hidden to recover at a later date. They believe they know the suspect, as this is a consistent pattern of behaviour.

They observed thieves are discerning about what they steal, usually selecting items that are of high value and are easily sold. They also claim that kangaroo and pig shooters use shooting as cover for snooping about. They believe local minors wanting mining equipment perpetrate most of the crime in their district.

**They have reported every incident to police and believe it is important to do so.**

*If we make a lot of noise about it and word gets back to the thieves that the police are active in the area and the farmer is aware, it may deter them. The police have been terrific. They come out to the property most times although they admit they don't have time to investigate as well as they would like. They do try to have patrols on the road and pull over suspects. The Police have asked us to note the type and make of suspicious vehicles and record the registration number, the number of occupants, and any other identifying information. The police suggested we follow trespassers but not confront them.*

The couple have discussed the thefts with their neighbours on social occasions. They also call their neighbours when they have had a theft. Increased security on farm includes locks on the house and fuel is stored on farm only when in use. All equipment is now kept close to the house. They have installed *Neighbourhood Watch* signs. They maintain that 'Private Property' and 'No Trespassing' signs entice people in by suggesting that there is something of value to steal.

### **6.5.3 Theft of wool**

Although the reports of the theft of wool were not high within the sample, the losses incurred by those who have been victims appear to be considerable. One wrote:

*We found a lock broken and wool stolen out of shed. The local officer actually saw my wool on a ute and traced it to a wool buyer in (a nearby town). But the police couldn't do anything. The bale had my brand on it too - it's hopeless. We had some sheep stolen as well. All up, I've lost about \$10,000 worth.*

Others reported:

*...We had two piles of wool stolen during shearing while fourteen men were asleep in the huts.*

*...Our shearing shed was "cleaned out" of tools etc. A small amount of wool was taken - all up about \$3,500*

### **6.5.4 Other theft**

The most frequently reported other types of theft involved the theft of fruit from fruit orchards. One respondent wrote: *Thieves took \$2,000 worth of cherries from our cool room. Never found them – cherries or the thieves.* Another noted that his neighbour “*lost an entire crop avocados during the night*”. Like many thefts of farm produce, it is virtually impossible to find proof.

#### **Pick of the Crop**

**Pete is a fruit grower north of the Sydney area. He has experienced the loss of the first pick of his peach crop. The first pick is the pick of the crop and brings the greatest return. He had inspected the fruit the day before the theft and noted that the fruit was ready to pick. However, the next day the fruit was gone; at least a bucket of fruit from each tree. It had been a moonlight night and he believes thieves were responsible. At first he thought fruit bats were the culprits but then he noticed that the thefts occurred every year just prior to picking. He reported the thefts to police but was told he needed an expert to confirm there had been a theft. He consulted the Department of Agriculture but was unable to find someone to provide the necessary evidence.**

### **6.5.5 Fraud**

The sale of misrepresented goods or services, or the default of payment were the categories defined by the survey as fraud. Those respondents who reported being a victim of fraud described the following examples.

*...Once we were not paid for our wool that was shorn at another place. It was not a great amount of wool and was not worth much. We didn't pursue it because it would have been too much trouble. On another farm, we lost timber (cut and not paid for by a sawmill that went broke) and the same thing happened with a sorghum crop (company went broke and didn't pay). That farm had to be sold in the end. If the frauds had not occurred, it would have been quite profitable.*

*...A man cutting cypress pine for a sawmill redirected one load at least (\$150 or so) and delivered it to another sawmill. He promised to pay but never did. Grain (triticale) was picked up and payment was never made. It was worth about \$1,300. We did pursue it through our solicitor without success. All up our losses from fraud have amounted to \$8,900.*

### **6.5.6 Break and enter**

Farmhouses being isolated and often unattended are subject to break and enter. One respondent wrote:

*We have had three break and enters at a cost of \$12,000. We were away at a function one evening and came home to find the door broken down and the house ransacked. A range of goods, jewellery, etc. was stolen. The next break and enter occurred in the daytime. We were only next door and came home to find windows broken and money and radio cassettes stolen. We reported the thefts but had no result from the first or second crime. However, on the third occasion, I came home to find the children (three children aged 10-13) in the act. I chased them through paddocks – caught two and the police later caught the third.*

Break and enter of farmhouses can be organised thefts often involving the removal of almost all items in the house. One respondent reported:

*The house was broken into – stoves, hot water system, heaters, and cupboards were stolen.*

### **6.5.7 Illegal trespassers and shooters**

Illegal trespassers and shooters are seen as responsible for damage to crops, failure to shut gates, arson and other environmental damage, vandalism, and disturbance to stock, indiscriminate shooting of stock and for having dogs that can attack livestock. As one farmer reported:

*We have constant problems with pig shooters trespassing, cutting fences and driving across crops.*

One farmer wrote:

*The main crime here is trespassing. These people cut fences that mix up animals from neighbouring properties. It takes a long time to fix a fence. The estimated cost is \$3,000 per km.*

Another wrote:

*At least once a month young men drive around the property at night between 3 and 6am with savage dogs and guns searching for and catching wild pigs. They leave gates open (and litter) which disturbs stock patterns. They damage roads and fences and stock organisation and do not seek permission, or gain it.*

Illegal trespassers and shooters frequently bother one family who has a large holding in outback New South Wales. The property has been subject to a number of thefts making the owners extremely suspicious of strangers:

*We are mostly a cropping operation and we don't get around the place as often as graziers do. But everytime we do, we find trespassers. Some fishermen go through the property to fish in the river. They seem to think they have a right to go there. We heard a bloke in the pub was selling maps to the river on our property! We have one local shooter who is known and trusted that we allow on the place. We don't mind if shooters ring and ask permission but we stipulate that there are to be no dogs. One time we found a person we knew was ringing for others. The shooters brought dogs with them so we would not deal with him again.*

One farmer stated that in future he would ask for references from other farmers in the district before allowing shooters on his property. Other respondents were suspicious of illegal trespassers and shooters of being responsible for other crimes on farms such as the theft of fuel and diesel. One wrote:

*A big problem in this area is pig hunters trespassing on local properties who lose their dogs, which eventually attack farm livestock. As many of these people fall into the (feral) bracket, it is unclear whether they are the cause of many of the break and enters. However, their activities would certainly be of concern.*

## Goat Poaching

Gary has 147,000 acres of crown lease in the far west of the state producing sheep and cattle and goats. Property owners can claim feral goats found on their property.

*Feral goats have kept farmers alive out here. We lost more sheep than ever last year with blowfly strike and grass seeds. Goats don't cost a thing to run apart from some minor damage to fences- and they bring about \$30 each. People - mostly those on the dole from town, come onto the property to poach feral goats. The goats feed near the highway on shire land when it is dry, and people steal them then. They only get a \$129 fine for trespassing if they are caught. They only need to steal four goats to cover the fine. Everyone in the district knows when you go to town; they all know your movements. The country is so big - it's impossible to control. There is a main highway and two shire roads running through on the place, which makes it easier for people to access. Pigs shooters shoot from the road which was a real problem when we had people living in the house near the road.*

*We also lose killers, one or two at a time. These are not big losses. I wouldn't mind if people came and asked for a killer. I would give them one. I don't like it when they take without asking. These people also cut fences and leave gates open and the sheep get out on the road. They lose dogs that kill sheep and that is hard to control.*

*Putting up "No Trespassing" signs are a waste of time, people just steal them. We have put up 1080 Poison signs to deter trespassers. But if they see you mustering with your own dogs, they know you are not serious. It's very frustrating. In one way it is better not to know about the thefts. If you know the bloke, you may be tempted to take the law into your own hands.*

*We did catch one bloke. He had set up a temporary yard on our place to hold the goats. We reported it to the police but they weren't very interested. They said he was broke and couldn't pay the fine so why arrest him. He also steals tools and equipment. He is not a particularly nice person and would be dangerous if approached.*

*I understand the temptation. I thought about pinching goats from my neighbours once. It would be easy especially when nobody really owns them and they bring good money. There are no earmarks and if they cross over the boundary fence, they are yours. But you have to have principles and stick with them. When the neighbours are mustering, mobs split and if you ride the fences you can pick up a few. Also the wind will drive them over fences.*

### 6.5.8 Discovery of drugs

Six per cent of respondents reported finding drugs growing on their land. Owners of a large outback property discovered a marijuana crop on their property while chasing wild pigs. The pigs were enjoying foraging in the black plastic and mulch with the watering system, which was laid out on the plot of marijuana hidden in dense scrub.

Another participant reported that their house cow kept escaping and was found eating marijuana growing in the yard of another house on the property. At the time the family had been donating milk to the Salvation Army!

## 6.6 FINANCIAL LOSSES

Farmers in the main survey sample were asked to estimate the financial losses they incurred through criminal incidents on farm. Only 105 (27%) responded to this question reporting losses totalling \$728,403. Individual losses were reported up to \$110,000. The average loss was \$7,191. Livestock theft created the greatest individual losses for farmers with the total losses for livestock theft reaching \$669,123.23 (N=73). The average loss was \$9,166.00 (Std Dev. 719,116.74). Table 6.1 displays the financial losses incurred by property size and region.

**Table 6.1:**  
**Financial losses from victimisation by farm operation size.**

Region and Farm Size	Total losses (\$)	Mean financial losses (\$)
<b>Coastal/range/range</b>		
Large (N=17)	323,221.23	<b>19,013.0</b> (SD 34666.67)
Small (N=19)	54,380.0	<b>2,862.11</b> (SD 2660.99)
<b>Inland</b>		
Large (N=8)	96,500.0	<b>12,062.5</b> (SD 14024.05)
Small (N=21)	123,550.0	<b>5,883.3</b> (SD 12,661.65)
<b>Outback</b>		
Large (N=8)	51,950.0	<b>6,493.75</b> (SD 4,696.54)
Small (N=73)	62,802.0	<b>5,233.5</b> (SD 4749.79)
<b>Large Farms (N=33)</b>	471,671.2	<b>14,293.0</b> (SD=26,019.67)
<b>Small Farms (N=52)</b>	240,732.0	<b>4,629.0</b> (SD=46 8493.0)
<b>TOTAL (N=87)</b>	<b>728,403.2</b>	<b>8372.45</b> (SD=17,796.33)

## 6.7 REPORTING CRIME

One of the biggest obstacles police face in dealing with farm crime is the lack of reporting of crimes by farmers. Only 49% of all victims of crime within the sample had reported crimes to police. Three respondents who had been victims of livestock theft and had their experiences reported in the media received several calls from other victims of theft who had not bothered to report to police. One commented:

*I had about fifteen people call me who were very empathetic but twelve had not reported their thefts to police.*

### 6.7.1 Reporting rates

Survey participants who were victims of crime were asked to indicate whether or not they reported the incident to police. Figure 6.15a displays the reporting rate across the various types of theft while Figure 6.15b presents the reporting rates for the other types of property crime investigated. Break and enter crimes and the theft of machinery were more likely to be reported to police. These types of crimes are more likely to be covered by insurance. Apart from the desire to recover stolen property, insurance claims necessitate reporting the incident to police (Matka, 1997).

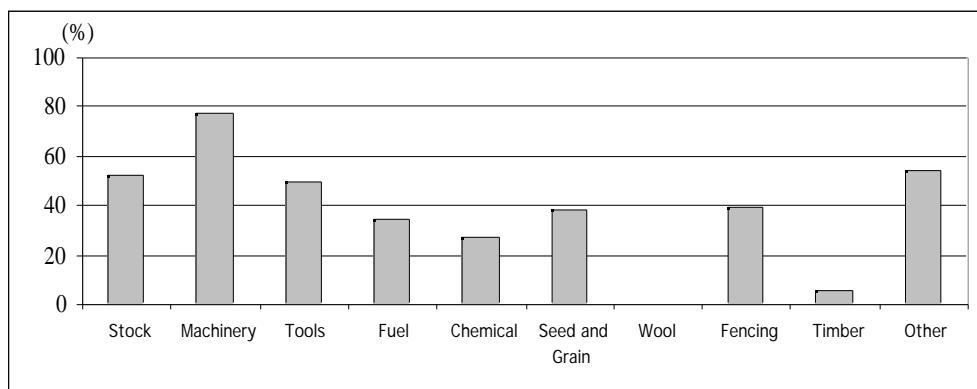


Figure 6. 15a: Reporting rate for thefts (N=393).

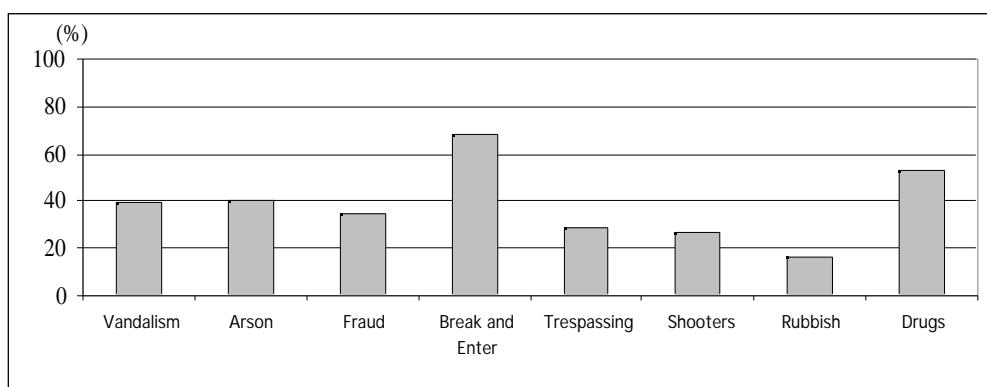


Figure 6.15b: Reporting rate for property crime other than theft (N=393).

### **6.7.2 Reasons for not reporting crimes**

Survey respondents were asked to indicate what were the main reasons that influenced or would influence their decision not to report a crime. The following are the reasons the survey respondents provided.

**Lack of proof:** Fifty-seven per cent failed to report a crime because of lack of proof. It can be difficult to prove what and how much livestock, crops, fuel or timber have been stolen. Failure to keep adequate records also prevents farmers from reporting thefts.

#### **No Records- No Proof**

**Rob runs cattle on 1717 acres on the central coast. He had seventeen cattle stolen one weekend while his son was away from the property. The cattle were taken from three different paddocks but there was no evidence at the scene. The thieves did not use the loading race and there were no tracks or damage to the fences or gates. The theft was not discovered until a fortnight later.**

*The cattle were branded but I didn't report it because I didn't keep records. I didn't have a stock book but I kept all the numbers in my head and recorded some details. I heard you needed to keep good records for police to be interested so I didn't bother. Anyway, it's too hard to get a conviction - you have to catch the thieves in the act. The cattle were worth a bit though. We lock everything up now. We asked around but nobody knew anything - well if they did they wouldn't have owned up. I believe it was definitely someone close who knew where the stock were and that my son was going away.*

**Doubt:** Fifty-five per cent of respondents could not be sure that a theft or crime had actually occurred. With small stock losses, there are always doubts about whether stock have merely strayed or have died from natural causes.

**Time lag:** It is common for livestock to be stolen, transported and disposed of long before the theft is discovered. Producers can remain unaware of stock losses until mustering, which can be as infrequent as once a year on large properties. Unless stock is taken in large numbers, farmers accept such losses as inevitable and do not report them. The fact that too much time had passed was reported by 53% of respondents as the reason that they did not report a crime. One respondent wrote:

*We had a theft of ten head of stock worth \$5000. I felt like a dill for not picking up the loss earlier than I did.*

Another reported:

*Stock are easy to miss in a muster. I missed 90 sheep in the last muster but I know they are there. Farmers hesitate to point the finger unless they are really sure. Some only see their stock twice a year.*

**Waste of time:** Forty-four per cent believed that police are unable to catch offenders or recover stolen property and therefore it is a waste of time reporting crimes. One farmer producing fine wool on his property in the northern tablelands stated:

*I had 400 sheep taken last Christmas. You could see the truck tyre marks in the mud but I didn't report it - it's hopeless - nothing would be done. I did warn my neighbours and suggested they lock their gates. I occasionally lose a couple of sheep - that's obviously freezer food. You can expect to lose about 80 through natural causes but not 400! I only run 2000 sheep.*

Similarly, another woman reported:

*We lost 34 Charolais worth \$1400 each. The cattle were on agistment in very open rugged country near the Queensland border. When we realised they were gone, we hired a plane to search the area but had no luck. We did not report the thefts to police because we did not believe anything could be done.*

**Police lack knowledge:** Twenty-four per cent believed it is a waste of time reporting crimes because police (especially those from the city) have little knowledge or understanding of agricultural industries. One respondent wrote:

*I believe police are disinterested. If they were serious, they would regularly attend sheep and cattle sales and find out prices of stock. One police officer asked was a Limousin an imported tractor. There is a general lack of knowledge of sheep, cattle and farming generally. My neighbours lost a top young Hereford calf and the policeman could not believe someone could walk up to a calf and carry him off. I was present when the owner demonstrated how it was done.*

Some claimed that there was a lack of interest amongst police officers regarding crimes on farms. One wrote:

*I reported 16 two year-old heifers stolen to police. Ten days later they rang and asked me to call at the station. It's hopeless. The loss of 100 ewes in August meant I did not even bother to call police – it's a waste of time. With the wool and the sheep, it was a financial loss of over \$6000.*

**Avoiding the hassles:** Thirty per cent would not want the hassles of the legal process. Penalties for thieves were perceived to be too light.

**Media:** Seventeen per cent were concerned about the media getting hold of their story. One respondent, who had been a victim of repeated instances of livestock theft, was featured in a newspaper article on livestock theft. The report referred to the few stock they had remaining, which were subsequently stolen.

**Handle it themselves:** Fourteen per cent would rather deal with the problem themselves. Several of those we interviewed reported that when they became aware of their stock in a neighbour's property, they just rounded them up and brought them home. One reported:

*I was missing some sheep and rode all over the property looking for them. I had heard rumours that the neighbour was a thief. So I went over there and found the sheep in his yards near the house. The neighbour said they had just wandered and he was going to call me - but the sheep had already eaten down the paddock. It was easier to get a truck and transport them back to my place than go to the police.*

**Small communities:** Twenty-eight per cent reported that living in a small community would make reporting a suspect in the district very difficult. One woman wrote:

*In small communities there are always whispers but unless the crime is of considerable significance, the onus of proof and repercussions of any action make it not worthwhile to proceed.*

Police have complained that there is a code of secrecy among farmers in rural communities, which deny police the information required to secure a warrant and target offenders. Some people withhold information fearing retribution. Some will provide information to police on some criminal activity but will not name the suspect. Many of the farmers we interviewed reported that they were experiencing ongoing livestock theft at the hands of a neighbour or someone in the close vicinity. Two of these farmers had reached the point of selling their properties because they could no longer withstand the financial loss. One farmer who had tried to warn others in his district about his immediate neighbour who was stealing his stock, was pressured to keep the peace under threat of exclusion from the community. One victim of livestock theft wrote:

*Quite a number of farmers have said to us: "If you can't accept theft as being as inevitable as death and taxes, you don't belong". Another told us: "If you can't keep track of your stock, then you don't deserve to have them. Only a poor manager loses his stock".*

One woman told of the experience of being falsely accused of stock theft by someone in their district:

*During the drought we grazed stock on stock routes in our district. The police accused us of having stolen stock in our mob. Someone had lost Jersey cattle and we had two Jerseys with calves plus three others we had just purchased from a neighbour. The neighbour sold the remaining cattle to three other people and one was the person who had lost stock. The Police made us yard our stock and they took photos. The accuser identified our stock as his and we had to argue that the calves were too old to have been his. We had proof of sale of the three bought from the neighbour. The police later found his cattle, which had escaped through a fence. We would have liked an apology.*

Of the respondents to the survey, only 9% reported that there was nothing that would hinder them reporting crimes to police. Table 4 displays the range and proportion of respondents' reasons for not reporting a crime.

---

**Table 6.2:  
Respondent's reasons for not reporting crime**

---

Reason for not reporting	(%)
Too difficult to prove	57
Difficult to tell if a crime had occurred	55
Too much time had past	53
Waste of time reporting - Police can't do much	44
Police have no knowledge or understanding about farming	24
Would not want the hassles of the legal process	30
Would not want the media getting hold of the story	17
Rather deal with the problem myself	14
Living in a small community, there would be problems reporting a suspect in the district	28

---

### 6.7.3 Alternative means of reporting crimes

We asked participants whether they were aware of the 131 444 Freecall Police Assistance Line (PAL) for reporting non-urgent crimes to police or the 1800 333 000 Crime Stoppers number. We further asked participants whether they would use these numbers to report crimes to police or whether they would prefer to report crimes directly to their local police station. Only 92 (24%) had heard of the PAL line, while 245 (64%) knew of the Crime Stoppers number. However, the majority, 288 (75.6%) reported they would use such an option to report farm crimes to police. Yet, almost the same number 283 (74%) reported that given the choice, they would prefer to report crimes directly to local police.

## **6.8 SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the findings of the investigation into the extent of property crimes victimisation on farms across New South Wales. The results reveal that property crime on farms is endemic with many producers incurring serious financial and personal losses. The high proportion of respondents who reported being a victim of crime is of concern and demonstrates the need for an increased awareness of the extent of agricultural crime. Many respondents reported being victims of multiple incidences of crime and/or victims of several different types of crime. Several respondents provided suggestions for some crime prevention strategies on farm. These are summarised and are presented in Appendix 1.

The main types of crime experienced are the thefts of tools and equipment, livestock, and fuel. Tool and equipment theft appears to be extensive and causes considerable inconvenience for farmers when they discover the loss of a piece of equipment at a time when they most need it. While Australian farmers' experiences of tool and equipment theft are similar to their counterparts in other countries, concerns about the high incidence of livestock theft appears to be unique to Australia. The study revealed the preponderance of stock thefts in areas close to the Queensland border. This finding suggests the need for closer monitoring of thefts interstate to sale outlets in southern Queensland. The increased risk through stock theft, of the spread of disease or the possibility of contaminated meat reaching the domestic or international markets, is of paramount concern.

Thefts appear to be seasonal, corresponding to those times when stock are at a premium for example, just prior to calving, lambing or shearing. There were no other consistent patterns in the time of day that thefts occur. Thieves appear to be quite bold, and are confident of the ease of getting away with farm crime. Farmers appear to be resigned to the fact that there is little they can do to adequately secure their properties and their livestock. They also believe that there is little the police can do to solve or prevent crime.

Illegal trespassers and shooters are the greatest concern for producers. The offenders have little respect for farm property and there were several reports of damage to crops, livestock and farm infrastructure. There is also a close association between the presence of illegal trespassers and shooters and the occurrence of other types of crime. Tighter legislation is required to control illegal trespass and shooting on farms.

There were twenty-six people (6%) who reported finding cannabis growing on their properties. Ten of these reported more than one incident. The problem of illegal drug laboratories and cannabis plantations in rural regions is an issue that should be explored further. Likewise, the illegal dumping of waste or rubbish on farms was a problem for 11% of respondents, suggesting that this issue is also worthy of further investigation.

Farmers' reticence to report crimes was examined. Crimes covered by insurance, such as the theft of household items or large items of machinery were more likely to be reported to police. It was interesting to note that the majority of respondents would use the option of the Freecall PAL to report farm crimes to police. However, there were several reasons why farmers failed to report crimes. These included the difficulty of establishing that a crime had actually occurred and then finding sufficient evidence to report it in a timely fashion to police. Many farmers believe it is a waste of time reporting crimes because there is little the police can do. Others maintained police have little knowledge or understanding of agricultural crime to effectively deal with investigations. These perceptions need to be addressed in any future crime prevention programs for farmers.

The fact that many victims of crime suffer in silence in some rural communities is of concern. Many victims are placed under pressure to not accuse someone in the community of theft. It was imperative that they remain in harmony with their neighbour even though they may suspect he or she is the offender. Great importance is placed on the strength of a united community in times of bushfire or flood. Victims would rather trade out of stock or sell up their properties than be subject to exclusion within their community. This extraordinary influence upon victims makes agricultural crime quite unique.

# Chapter Seven

## Security on-Farm

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the most important trends in criminology is the growing importance of the concept of place to the study of crime (Tittle, 2000; Felson, 1998; Brantingham & Brantingham, 1993; Mazerolle, 2000). In this chapter, property crime on farms is analysed using the concept of place. Spatial variations in the geographical location of properties that had been victimised were analysed. Nine types of crimes were compared against a range of ecological variables within the data to identify those factors that influenced a farm's vulnerability to victimisation. The crime types were also compared against a number of security measures employed by farmers in order to identify the effect of such strategies on victimisation rates.

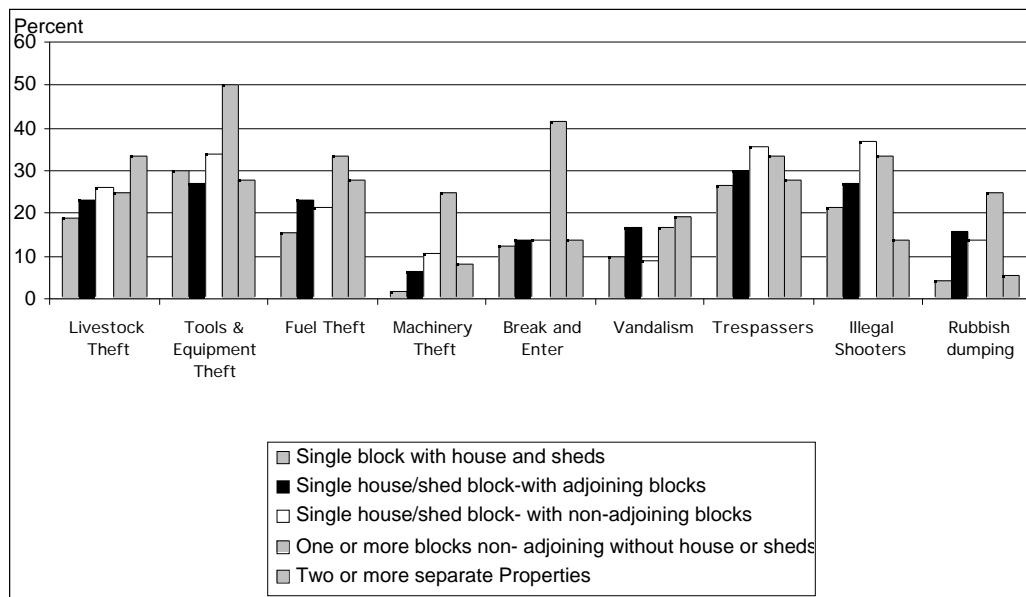
### 7.2 THE ECOLOGY OF AGRICULTURAL CRIME

To identify those factors that influenced a farm's vulnerability to victimisation, ecological factors were examined in conjunction with crimes occurring to farms during the past two years. The ecological factors included the terrain of the property, the cover, the layout of the property, the visibility between the house and shed on the property, and the distance of the property from a public road or a highway and the nearest town or service centre. Nine of the most prevalent crimes reported in the data were examined in this analysis. These included the theft of livestock, tools and equipment, machinery, and fuel, vandalism, break and enter, illegal trespassers and shooters, and rubbish dumping on farmland.

#### 7.2.1 Farm layout

The characteristics of the five different types of property layout were described in Chapter Five. In this section, the rates of nine categories of crime are compared across the five kinds of farm layout. Generally, the most common types of layout, a single block with a house and sheds and a single house block with adjoining blocks, reported the greater proportion of crime. There was no difference between the various farm layouts and overall victimisation. However, those properties that comprised one or more unoccupied non-adjoining blocks of land were

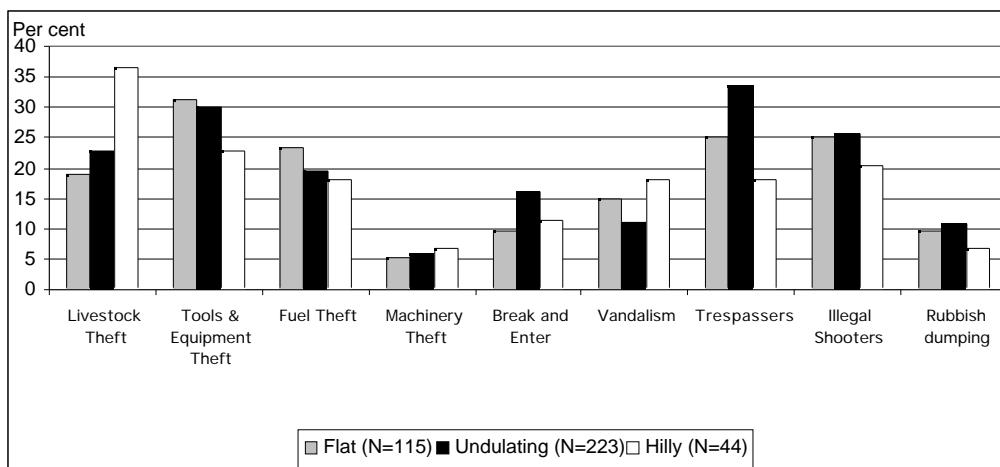
significantly more likely to experience the illegal dumping of rubbish ( $\chi^2=14.15$ ,  $p<0.006$ ) and the theft of machinery ( $\chi^2=14.9$ ,  $p<0.005$ ). These types of layout were also susceptible to more tool and equipment theft, fuel theft, and break and enter crimes. These results suggest that the less guardianship on a property, the greater the potential for crime. Figure 7.1 displays victimisation rates for the nine crime types by farm layout type.



**Figure 7.1: Agricultural crime by type of property layout (N=393).**

### 7.2.2 Terrain

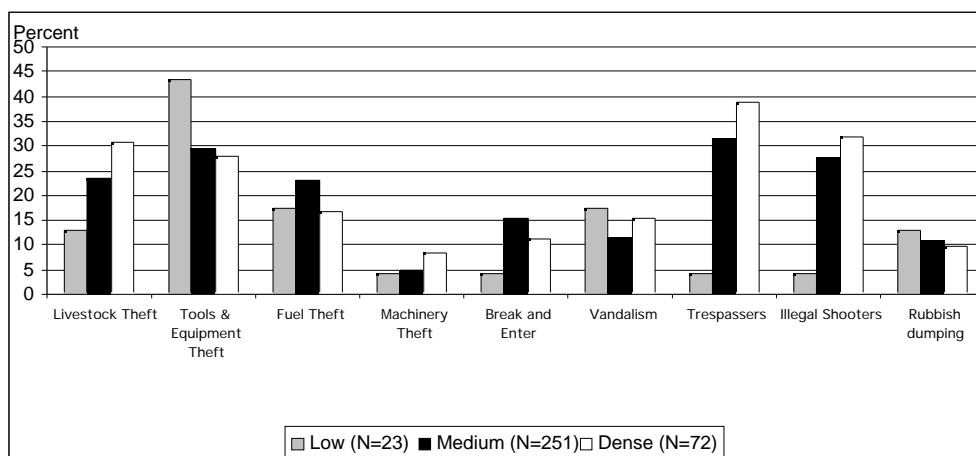
Farmers were asked to describe their properties in terms of terrain. Their responses comprised three main types of terrain: flat, undulating or hilly. Figure 7.2 shows the cross-tabulations of the three types of terrain with crimes occurring to farms during the past two years. The only relationships found between terrain and victimisation were for reported stock thefts and illegal trespassing. Farmers who described the terrain of their operation as hilly were much more likely to report the theft of stock ( $\chi^2=5.34$ ,  $p<0.06$ ) while illegal trespassing was more likely to occur on properties with undulating terrain ( $\chi^2=5.56$ ,  $p<0.06$ ).



**Figure 7.2: Agricultural crime by type of terrain (N=393).**

### 7.2.3 Cover

Farmers were also asked to describe their operations in terms of cover. These descriptions were reduced to three types: low (grasslands or cultivation), medium (scattered trees), and dense (bush or trees). Farms described as having dense cover were found to experience significantly more illegal trespassers ( $\chi^2=9.72$ ,  $p<0.007$ ) and illegal shooters ( $\chi^2=6.92$ ,  $p<0.03$ ). Farms with dense cover also experienced higher levels of stock theft.



**Figure 7.3: Agricultural crime by type of vegetation (N=393).**

### 7.2.4 Distance and visibility

Participants were also asked to provide information on the distance of their property from the nearest town or service centre, and from a public road or highway. The degree of visibility of the farm shed and buildings from the farmhouse was also sought. This information was required to investigate whether factors of isolation and low visibility rendered a property more vulnerable to crime. These factors were then compared with the nine selected farm crimes. For

the analyses, the buildings insight of the farm residence were defined as *less than half* of the buildings and *more than half* of the buildings insight of the farmhouse. Table 7.1 presents the results of only those factors where a significant relationship was revealed.

**Table 7.1:**  
**Victimisation by factors of distance and visibility.**

Factor	Per cent victimised, by type								
	Fuel Theft	Tool Theft	Stock Theft	Machinery	Break and Enters	Malicious Damage	Illegal Trespassers	Illegal Shooters	Rubbish dumping
<b>Buildings on main property in sight of farm residence</b>									
< Half (n=37)	40.50	45.90	24.30	21.6	27.00	16.20	54.10	40.50	24.30
Half (n=125)	23.20	32.80	23.20	8.80	18.40	17.60	33.60	30.40	12.00
All (n=226)	15.90*	25.70*	22.10	2.20**	8.80*	10.20	23.00*	19.90*	7.50**
<b>Distance from a town</b>									
<10 km (n=109)	16.50	29.40	11.90	7.90	15.60	11.00	24.80	19.30	11.40
10-19 km (n=109)	19.30	28.40	24.80	4.60	16.50	12.80	28.10	21.10	12.80
20-49 km (n=129)	24.80	31.80	28.70	5.4	13.20	13.20	33.30	26.40	9.30
>50 km (n=41)	24.40	29.30	29.30*	7.3	7.30	17.10	48.80*	51.20*	4.90
<b>Main property borders highway</b>									
No (n=349)	19.80	29.20	23.50	6.60	14.30	11.70	27.50	23.50	9.70
Yes (n=44)	27.30	36.40	18.20	2.30	11.40	22.70*	45.50*	40.90*	15.90

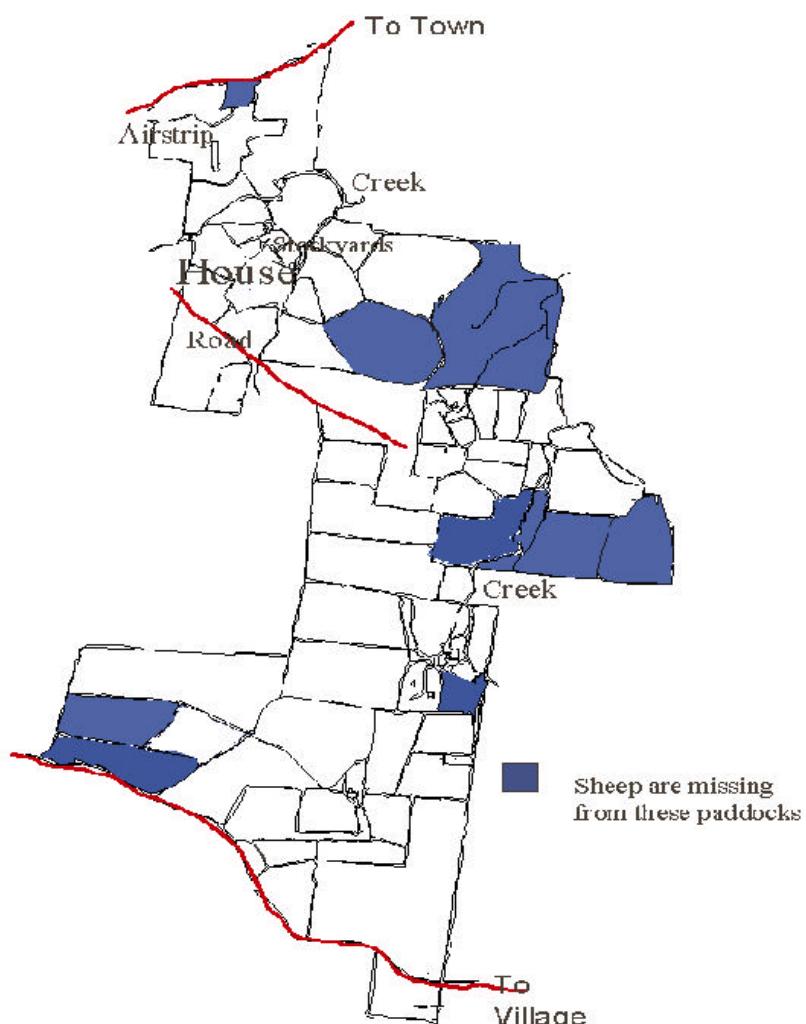
\*all reported  $\chi^2$  values are statistically significant at 0.05

\*\*all reported  $\chi^2$  values are statistically significant at 0.01

It is clear that the visibility of farm buildings to the residence was associated with crime. With the exceptions of stock theft and malicious damage, visibility was associated with less victimisation of fuel theft ( $\chi^2 = 12.52$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), tool theft ( $\chi^2 = 6.98$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), machinery theft ( $\chi^2 = 22.81$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ), break and enter ( $\chi^2 = 12.42$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), illegal trespassers ( $\chi^2 = 16.35$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), illegal shooters ( $\chi^2 = 9.75$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and the dumping of rubbish ( $\chi^2 = 9.89$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). As distance from a town increased, so too did the rates of reported livestock theft ( $\chi^2 = 11.02$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), illegal trespassers ( $\chi^2 = 12.37$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and illegal shooters ( $\chi^2 = 17.66$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Rates of break and enter and rubbish dumping were higher on properties close to towns. Where the main property of the farm was reported to border a highway, there was a significant increase in rates of malicious damage ( $\chi^2 = 4.17$ ,

$p<0.05$ ), illegal trespassers ( $\chi^2 = 6.05$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), and illegal shooters ( $\chi^2 = 6.25$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

The relationship between visibility and farm crime was evident in one respondent's account of a series of thefts on his 5,000 acre sheep property. Over a 14-month period to November 2000, 413 sheep were stolen. The greatest concern for the owner is that his property is under quarantine due to the presence of Ovine Johnes Disease (OJD). Despite the producer complying with precautions, sheep losses persist ranging between 30 and 90 at a time, often just prior to shearing. Although not a large property, the terrain is very hilly so monitoring is difficult. Figure 7.4 displays a map of the layout of this property. The map illustrates that stock kept in paddocks that are located in close proximity to roads and creek beds were more vulnerable to theft. The thefts also occurred from paddocks that were some distance from the main house and sheds. The grazier now rigorously musters his sheep and conducts monthly counts. The property also uses night time surveillance although not all of the property can be monitored every night. For this reason, he has installed electronic surveillance. Since the implementation of these security methods, there have been no re-occurrences of theft. This shows that stock theft requires two conditions; lack of surveillance and accessibility.



**Figure 7.4: Location of sheep thefts on property.**

From an ecological perspective, there appears to be four classes of crime. The first is fuel, tool and machinery theft, and break and enter crimes. These three crimes showed the least variation across space. However, all three were inversely related to the visibility of farm sheds and buildings to the farm residence. As visibility increased, the chance that these three crimes would occur decreased.

Stock theft appears to have a unique ecology. Farms located some distance from a town, or that had a hilly terrain, were more likely to experience stock theft. Although not quite statistically significant, farms that were described by their owners as having dense cover were more likely to experience stock theft. Therefore, the most vulnerable farms to livestock theft are those operations that are physically isolated and contain places where thieves can operate undetected.

The third class of crimes includes malicious damage and the presence of illegal trespassers and shooters. Farms with the main property bordering on a highway were more likely to experience higher levels of all three crimes. Visibility of sheds and buildings to the farm residence was inversely related to the presence of illegal trespassers and shooters, as was the distance from a town. The more dense the vegetation, the more likely properties will experience illegal trespassers and shooters. It appears that the ecology for these crimes is an ironic combination of remoteness and accessibility. The vulnerable farm must be distant from an urban centre, yet be easily accessed from a highway, and as well, have areas that are not visible from the farm residence.

Lastly, the dumping of rubbish is of interest as it was inversely related to the visibility of sheds and buildings to the farmhouse but positively related to the distance from town. As described above, rubbish dumping was more likely to occur on properties that were uninhabited. The closer to town, the more likely a property would be subject to rubbish dumping. Although not significant, rubbish dumping was also more likely to occur on properties that bordered a highway.

### **7.3 SECURITY MEASURES EMPLOYED ON FARMS**

In addition to ecological factors, we asked farmers a series of questions about the security measures they employed on farms. The purpose was to ascertain the lengths property owners went to protect their property from crime victimisation. Participants were asked to indicate from a list of twenty-eight security measures, how often each practice was employed. The security measures included seven different kinds:

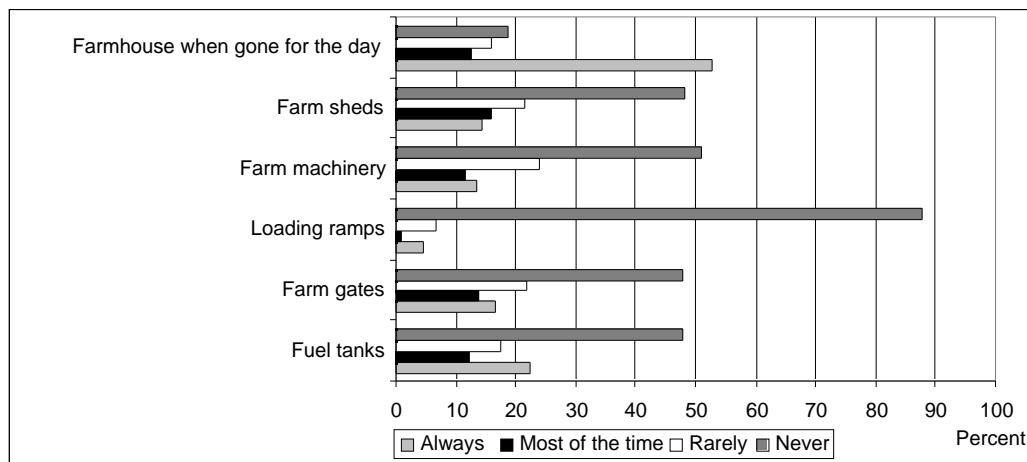
- (1) Locking fuel tanks, gates, loading ramps, tractors and other farm machinery, farm sheds and buildings, and the farmhouse when gone for the day;
- (2) Frequency of checking livestock and use of identification on livestock;
- (3) Keeping records of farm equipment and their serial numbers, stock numbers and identification, stock movements, and putting personal identification on farm machinery, tools and equipment;

- (4) Having a watch dog and having a neighbour to check on property when away for any period of time;
- (5) Storing loading ramps, farm machinery and fuel tanks out of sight of a main road;
- (6) Maintaining sound boundary fences and having “no trespass” signs on farm property; and
- (7) Having security lights or alarms on house and farm buildings.

Response categories for the behaviours were: *never*, *rarely*, *most of the time*, and *always*. As some of the security measures involved specialised functions not applicable to all properties in the sample, a *not applicable* category was also provided. All results presented have been adjusted for those *not applicable* responses.

### 7.3.1 Use of locks

The degree farmers utilised locks and chains as security on their property is displayed in Figure 7.5. A greater proportion of respondents (64%) reported that they locked their house when gone for the day. However, other areas of the property were generally left unsecured. Loading ramps were least likely to be chained and locked when not in use.



**Figure 7.5: Rate of locking of farm property across the sample (N=393).**

There were no significant differences across the farm types and regions in the use of locks on farm property (See Table 7.2). However, large farms were more likely to lock fuel tanks, gates and loading ramps. Smaller farms were more diligent in securing the farmhouse, sheds and farm machinery. This finding may be a factor of smaller properties being closer to urban centres and thus more aware of break and enter crimes.

---

**Table 7.2:****Use of locks on farm property across the farm types.**

Use of locks	Farm size by region						Whole Sample		
	Coastal		Inland		Outback		Large farms N=153	Small Farms N=239	Total N=393
	Large N=77 (%)	Small N=84 (%)	Large N=50 (%)	Small N=82 (%)	Large N=26 (%)	Small N=73 (%)			
Fuel tanks	47.9	32.4	28.0	36.2	28.0	26.9	37.8	31.9	34.4
Farm gates	37.8	30.3	34.0	32.9	20.0	19.4	33.6	27.8	30.1
Loading ramps	7.2	5.6	9.1	1.9	0	0	6.7	2.4	4.3
Farm machinery	27.8	34.7	20.4	24.0	15.4	20.0	23.1	26.4	25.1
Farm sheds	26.0	39.5	31.3	25.3	32.0	28.2	28.8	31.1	30.2
Farmhouse when gone for the day	67.6	74.1	57.1	67.5	57.7	58.9	62.4	67.1	65.3

---

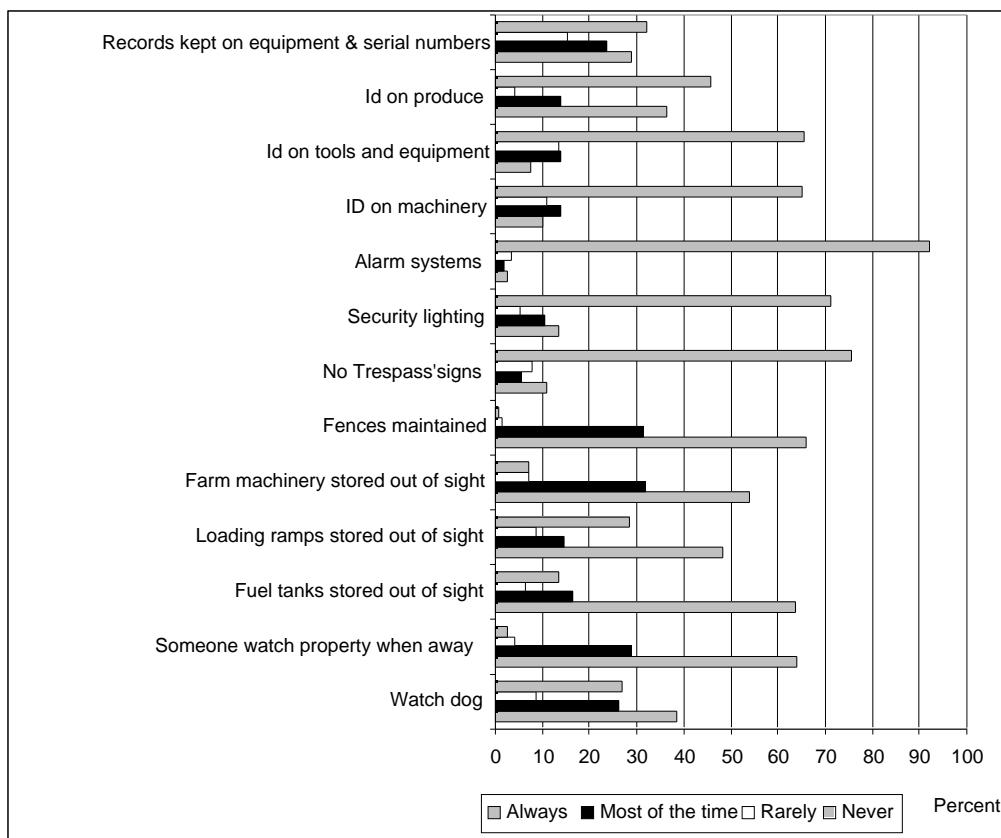
It is notable that farmers are more predisposed to locking the farm house when gone for the day but are extremely tardy in attending to locks in other areas of the property. These results suggest that farmers could do a lot more to secure their properties for very little cost. Several participants expressed irritation of having to concern themselves with having to lock up behind them as they worked. However, some reported that they were now more aware of crime.

As one wrote:

*Farmers have to be conscious of theft all the time. The more sparsely settled an area, the easier a target the farms are. You can't lock up a farm. My place is a mile off the highway so it's a bit safer. I've been lucky. There have been a few stock go missing but I think it's natural causes. Sometimes I've seen wool on a fence, which is suspicious. I report suspicious trucks hanging around especially if there is no sale on, such as trucks on a weekend. But I used to have drums of fuel and I don't now. And I don't leave fuel in the tank when I go away. I get people to mind my place when I'm away. Some farmers are careless - they need to be more aware. It used to be safer, I think it's sad.*

### 7.3.2 Other security measures

The rate the respondents reported using other means of security on their properties is presented in Figure 7.6.



**Figure 7.6: Other security measures employed on farm (N=393).**

Those security measures most often employed were the maintenance of fences, the storing of fuel tanks out of sight and ensuring someone watched over the property when the occupants were away. Of concern is that 65% of respondents reported never having identification on tools, equipment or machinery and only 46% had identification on farm produce. Few farmers used 'No trespass' signs or security lighting. Several respondents we interviewed maintained that 'No Trespass' signs indicate that a farm has something worth stealing. Alarm systems were the least used option. Unless farms are small and neighbours are close by, alarm systems on the farmhouse and buildings would be of little use. Alarms would have a place to alert graziers who have experienced repeated victimisation of livestock thefts. A sensor could be attached to an electric fence that enclose the stock and linked to an alarm in the farmhouse. The alarm would be activated if the fence was cut or broken.

In general, smaller farms were more diligent in these security precautions than were larger farms. There were significantly more small farms than large farms with a watchdog ( $\chi^2=3.62, p<0.05$ ). Small coastal properties in particular were more likely to have a watchdog ( $\chi^2=15.15, p<0.01$ ). There was a significant difference between the farm types in the proportion who maintained fences ( $\chi^2=14.09, p<0.01$ ). Coastal/range farmers were more attentive to fencing than were small outback farmers. More small farms than large farms had security lighting on houses and farm buildings ( $\chi^2=13.61, p<0.001$ ). This finding was reflected in the comparison of security lighting between the farm types. Small

coastal properties used more security lighting ( $\chi^2=22.48$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Outback properties and large inland properties were more likely to use identification on farm produce ( $\chi^2=32.26$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ).

**Table 7.3:**  
**Security measures employed on-farm by type.**

Security measures	Farm size by region						Whole Sample		
	Coastal		Inland		Outback		Large farms N=153	Small Farms N=239	Total N=393
	Large N=77 (%)	Small N=84 (%)	Large N=50 (%)	Small N=82 (%)	Large N=26 (%)	Small N=73 (%)			
Watchdog	56.1	80.3	68.2	67.1	47.8	57.4**	58.6	68.6*	64.9
Someone watching property when away	95.9	91.8	95.7	92.0	80.8	95.7	93.2	93.1	93.2
Fuel tanks stored out of sight	73.4	82.5	86.4	77.5	71.4	85.5	77.5	81.6	80.0
Loading ramps stored out of sight	54.4	64.3	65.6	69.1	60.0	63.5	58.7	65.8	62.8
Machinery stored out of sight	82.1	89.6	84.8	89.5	87.0	79.1	83.8	86.4	85.4
Fences maintained	75.0	74.7	56.3	67.1	66.7	51.4**	67.6	64.9	66.0
No trespass signs	15.3	16.7	18.8	12.0	34.6	15.2	19.9	14.6	16.7
Security lighting	9.7	39.0	21.7	28.6	8.0	21.7**	13.3	30.0**	23.5
Alarm systems	2.8	10.6	6.5	4.1	0	0	3.5	5.1	4.5
ID on machinery	16.7	19.1	18.8	27.0	38.5	32.8	21.2	26.3	24.2
Id on tools	12.5	20.0	18.4	27.0	34.6	22.7	18.4	23.3	21.3
ID on produce	42.6	19.6	60.5	50.8	76.0	65.5**	55.0	47.0	50.5
Records on equipment & serial numbers	43.8	53.9	48.9	51.9	50.0	63.4	46.6	56.2	52.4

\*All reported  $\chi^2$  values are statistically significant at 0.05

\*\*All reported  $\chi^2$  values are statistically significant at 0.01

All security measures were cross-tabulated with the nine most frequent types of victimisation to access the possible relationship between security measures and victimisation. For the cross-tabulations, the response categories of *never* and *rarely* were combined, as were *most of the time* and *always*. Given the pattern of results, the findings are not shown in tabular form. With only one exception, none of the precautions was found to reduce victimisation. The one and only finding that showed a relationship between guardianship and less crime, was the presence of a watchdog. Twenty per cent of farmers who indicated that they *rarely* or *never* have a good watch dog, reported a break and enter crime during the past

two years, compared to only 11.8% of farmers who reported the presence of a watch dog *most or all of the time*.

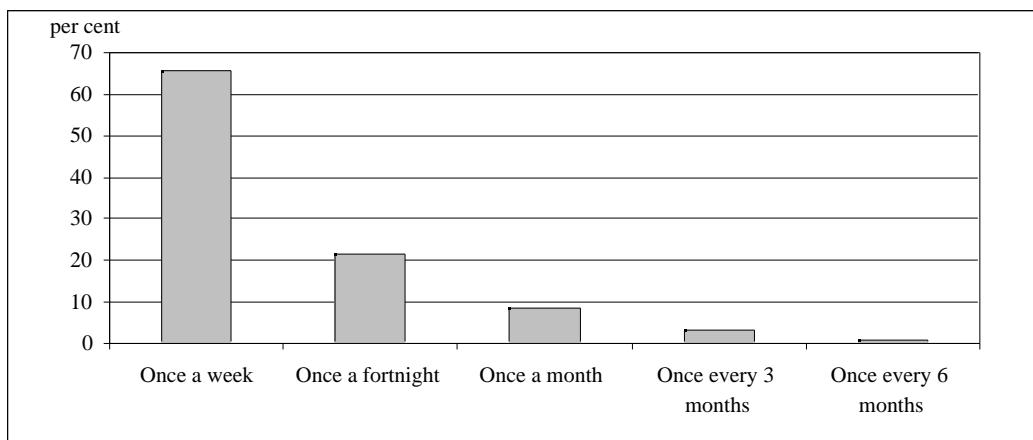
Sixteen of the other cross-tabulations were statistically significant, but the associations were positive, indicating more crime, not less. An examination of the transcripts from the qualitative interviews conducted in association with this study provides an interpretation of these seemingly anomalous relationships. It would appear that a small proportion of the security measures were more of a reaction to experiencing crime than a way of reducing victimisation. That is to say, farmers who were experiencing crime reacted by adopting various precautionary behaviours. As one respondent reported:

*I had tools, such as a chainsaw and angle grinder taken from the shed a fortnight ago worth about \$1,500. I checked the local pawnshops but I don't think I will get them back. We also lost 100 merino wethers between January and April. I only noticed the loss when we mustered. That's about a \$5,000 loss when you consider the loss of the fine wool. I now lock the sheds and gates all the time - even behind me when I go up the paddock. I also lock the truck. I have great neighbours but this is bushranger country and some of their progeny are still here!*

However, as most of the other cross-tabulations were not statistically significant, it can only be concluded that victimisation does not vary by the preventive actions of individual farmers.

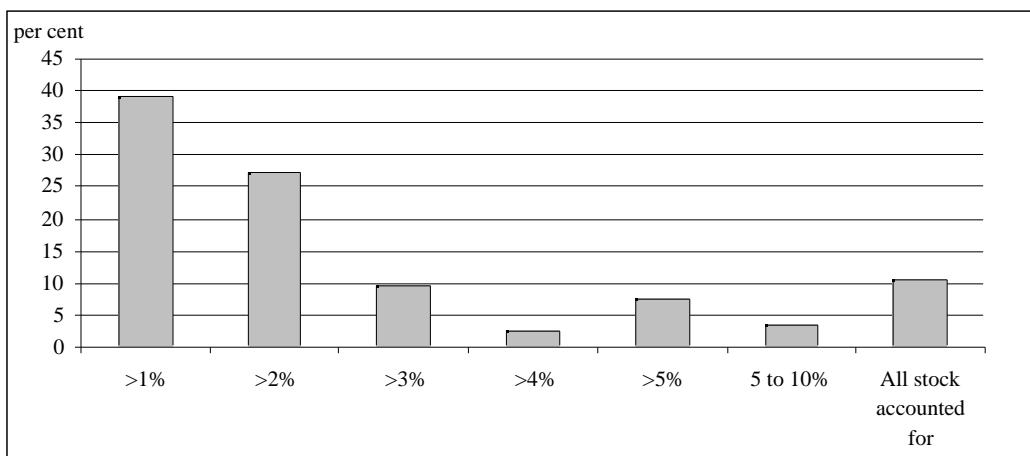
### 7.3.3 Livestock security

With concerns about livestock theft, additional information was sought on the safeguarding of livestock on farms. Graziers were asked how often they checked their stock. The majority checked stock at least once a week (see Figure 7.7). This result may reflect the large number of small properties in the sample. The smaller the farm, the greater the opportunity for checking stock more frequently.



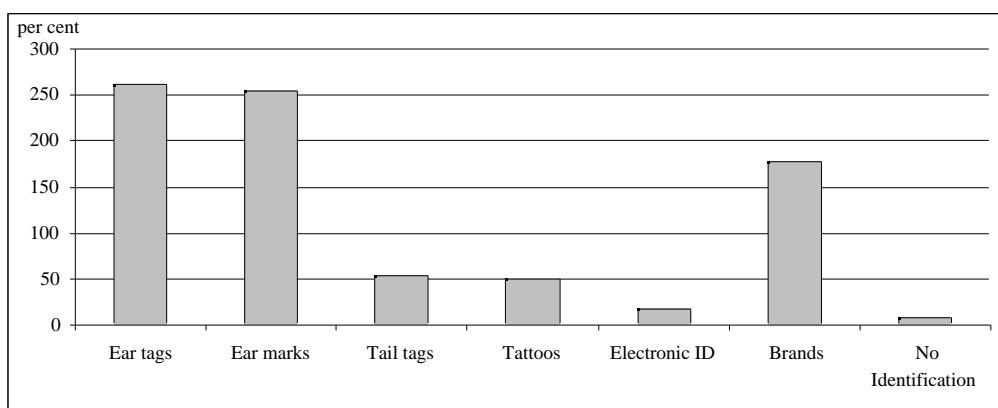
**Figure 7.7: Rate of checking stock across the sample (N=393).**

We also asked graziers what percentage of losses in a stock count would they attribute to natural causes, such as losses to death. Figure 7.8 presents the results. The percentages varied according to whether respondents had sheep or cattle. More provision was made for losses of sheep particularly during lambing. However, almost 11% of respondents reported that they made no allowance for any errors in their counts and that all deaths could be accounted for. Many of these respondents ran alpaca or horse studs, which would involve closer monitoring of stock. However, overall the margins allowed for losses to natural causes were small. This may present problems when farmers report thefts of stock to police. Some police we interviewed reported that they attribute 10% of discrepancies in stock losses to natural causes. Only 3% of the sample of farmers reported that they would assign between 5% and 10% of losses to natural causes.



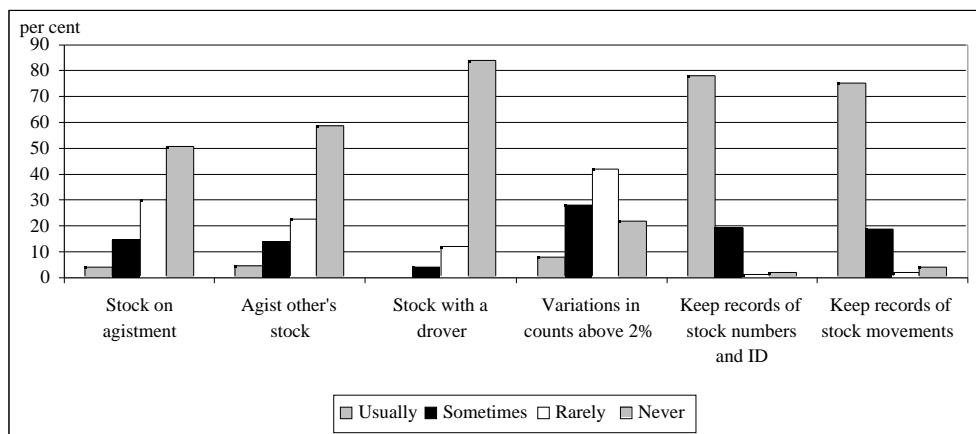
**Figure 7.8: Percentage of loss in a stock count attributed to natural causes across the sample (N=393).**

The types of identification participants used for their stock was also investigated (see Figure 7.9). Not surprisingly, the majority of respondents used earmarks and eartags. Branding was also common. Only 2% were using electronic identification. Only 1% reported they used no identification at all.



**Figure 7.9: Type of stock identification used across the sample (N=393).**

Other types of stock management practices investigated included how often participants found variations in stock counts of more than two per cent. We asked how often they placed stock on agistment, grazed them on stock routes with a drover, and whether they agisted other grazier's stock on their property. The degree they maintained records of stock identification and stock movements was also investigated. Responses were categorised as *usually*, *sometimes*, *rarely* or *never*. Figure 7.10 displays the various stock management practices across the sample.



**Figure 7.10: Stock management practices across the sample (N=393).**

Chi square comparisons of these stock management practices and the incidence of stock theft required some collapsing of the data. For the cross-tabulations, the response categories *never* and *rarely* were combined, as were *sometimes* and *usually*. Non-removable identification on livestock was coded *used* and *not used*, and checking on livestock was coded *once a fortnight or more* versus *less than once a fortnight*.

The livestock management practices were examined across the farm operation types. Farmers on smaller farms were more likely to check stock once or more a fortnight ( $\chi^2=12.15$ ,  $p<0.004$ ). Large outback property owners were significantly less likely to conduct fortnightly checks ( $\chi^2=21.26$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Large farms were more likely to have discrepancies in stock counts greater than two per cent ( $\chi^2=11.18$ ,  $p<0.0008$ ). Specifically, large outback properties reported greater inconsistencies in counts ( $\chi^2=43.3$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Outback properties were significantly more likely to agist other grazier's stock ( $\chi^2=38.37$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). Large farms were more likely to use stock identification than smaller farms for both removable ( $\chi^2=16.53$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ) and non-removable forms of identification ( $\chi^2=72.8$ ,  $p<0.006$ ). Graziers on large coastal/range and inland properties and both small and large outback properties were more likely to use removable forms of identification ( $\chi^2=47.52$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). Non-removable forms of stock identification were significantly more common on large coastal/range and outback farms ( $\chi^2=16.48$ ,  $p<0.006$ ).

**Table 7.4:**  
**Stock management practices employed by farm type.**

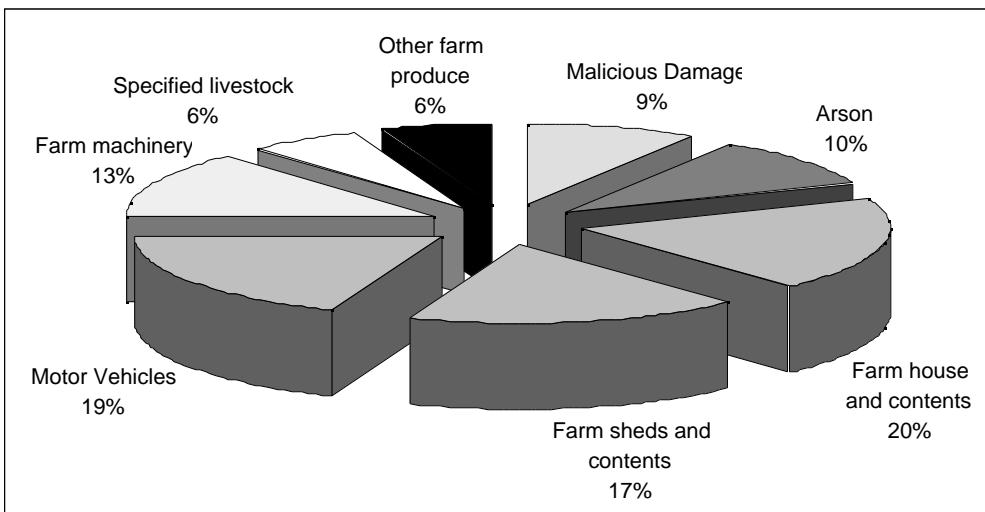
Stock management practices	Farm size by region						Whole Sample		
	Coastal		Inland		Outback		Large farms N=153	Small Farms N=239	Total N=393
	Large N=77 (%)	Small N=84 (%)	Large N=50 (%)	Small N=82 (%)	Large N=26 (%)	Small N=73 (%)			
Check stock once or more a fortnight	81.6	95.9	83.0	95.8	68.0	84.1**	79.7	92.3*	87.1
Stock on agistment	22.4	20.3	19.6	12.5	12.0	20.0	19.7	17.5	18.4
Agist other's stock	6.6	14.5	18.8	9.7	48.0	35.4**	17.4	19.2	18.5
Stock with a drover	0	2.7	6.3	2.8	8.0	7.9	3.4	4.3	3.9
Variations in counts above 2%	35.1	12.5	45.7	30.6	80.0	45.3**	46.2	28.8**	36.0
Records stock numbers and ID	94.7	95.9	100	97.3	96.2	98.5	96.6	97.2	97.0
Records stock movements	95.9	94.0	95.7	88.2	100	93.9	96.6	92.0	93.9
Removable ID	97.4	70.1	97.9	86.3	96.2	98.5**	97.4	84.2**	89.6
Non-removable ID	70.1	51.9	50.0	43.8	76.9	56.9**	64.9	50.7**	56.6

\*\*All reported  $\chi^2$  values are statistically significant at .01

The various methods of stock management were assessed against the incidence of reported livestock theft over the past two years. Only one factor was found to be related to a higher incidence of livestock theft. Those who reported experiencing greater discrepancies in stock counts of more than two per cent reported more livestock theft ( $\chi^2=18.07$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). None of the other stock management practices were found to be related to stock theft. In fact, as with the general security practices employed on farm described above, the data revealed that other stock management safeguards employed by participants were likely to be associated with more livestock theft, not less. Again, greater attention to stock management may be more of a reaction to victimisation.

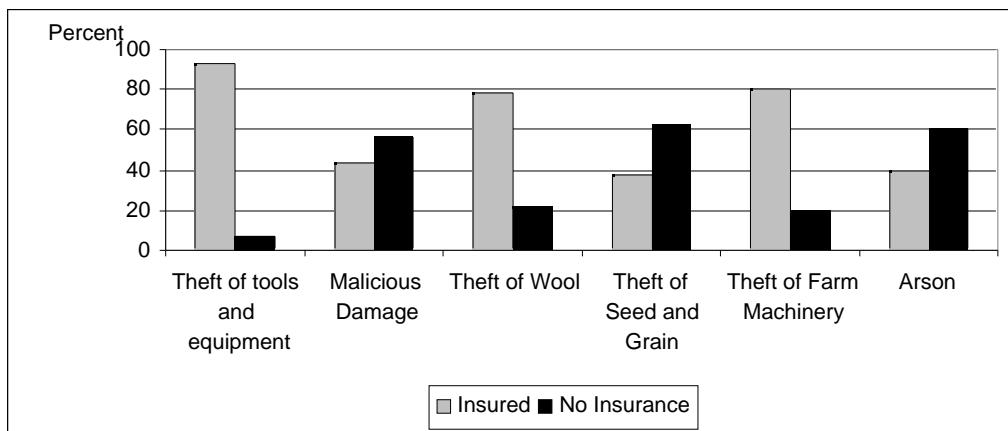
### 7.3.4 Insurance cover

Additional information was sought regarding the level of insurance cover held by participants. Figure 7.11 displays the proportion of participants who held various types of farm property insurance. The majority of respondents held insurance for farmhouse and contents, farm sheds and contents, and motor vehicles. Only 52.7% were covered for arson. Only 68% had cover for farm machinery. Less than half were sufficiently concerned about vandalism to pay for such cover. Few (29.8%) had stud livestock covered by insurance. As insurance is not available for the theft of general livestock, the financial losses from stock theft can be devastating for victims.



**Figure 7.11: Types of farm property insurance held across the sample (N=393).**

The victimisation rates were examined for those types of property crime that were, or were not covered by insurance. Figure 7.12 displays the proportion of respondents covered, or not covered by insurance, who experienced crime over the lifetime of farming. Those who were victims of wool theft were significantly more likely to have been covered by insurance ( $\chi^2=7.25$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). It is evident that victims of malicious damage were significantly less likely to have insurance cover ( $\chi^2=3.594$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Those who experienced the thefts of seed and grain and arson also had low insurance cover.



**Figure 7.12: Proportion covered by insurance and crimes experienced over lifetime and past two years (N=393).**

### 7.3.5 Other factors that influence guardianship

Over the past decade, severe drought and economic decline in rural Australia has left many farm families unable to sustain operating and capital budgets. As a result, many farmers are placed under continuous pressure to 'adjust' by making a range of changes in their business and households. Traditional responses have

included expansion of farm scale through land purchase and investment in capital-intensive technology. Other responses include a reduction of farm labour and more family participation in farm work, income supplementation with off-farm income, and reductions in non-essential farm business expenditures (Stayner and Crosby, 1999). These measures culminate in a reduction of the guardianship of the property. Livestock placed on agistment or grazed on roadsides are more vulnerable to theft. In Chapter 2, rates of livestock theft were higher in some areas at the height of the drought when more livestock were on the roadsides (See Figure 2.4). There are fewer people for surveillance with the retrenchment of farm employees and more farm family members taking up off-farm employment. Guardianship is reduced with less attention paid to the repair and maintenance of gates and fences and security generally on farm. Increasing operation size means there is more property to guard and often the costs are at the expense of other areas of farm management. The effect of these aspects of farm adjustment upon victimisation rates across the lifetime of farming was assessed across the sample. Only one aspect of farm adjustment, economising on farm repairs and maintenance, was found to be significantly related to higher levels of victimisation ( $\chi^2=8.99$ ,  $p<0.002$ ).

## 7.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter examined victimisation against a wide array of factors that influence the level of guardianship on a property. The factors ranged from the type of terrain and vegetation to the security measures adopted by farmers. The results clearly point to two important findings.

The first, and most important of the two, is that farm crime is highly situational (Clarke & Felson, 1993). Certain physical factors were clearly associated with farm crime, however, different traits were associated with different kinds of crimes. From an ecological perspective, there appear to be four classes of crime.

One class is fuel, tool and machinery theft and break and enter crimes. These three crimes showed the least variation across space. There were no statistically significant differences between these three crime types by a number of factors, including: type of terrain; amount of cover; distance from a town; and whether or not any of the farm properties bordered a public road or highway. However, all three crime types were inversely related to one factor, which appeared to override all other considerations. This factor was the visibility of farm sheds and buildings to the farm residence. As visibility increased, the chance that these three crimes would occur decreased.

Stock theft appears to have an ecology that is different from other types of theft and break and enter crimes. There were no statistically significant differences between stock theft and the visibility of buildings and whether or not the farm bordered a public road or highway. However, distance from a town was positively related to the occurrence of stock theft. The greater the distance, the

more likely a farm experienced a crime. Plus, farms that were described by their owners as having a hilly terrain (in contrast to a flat or undulating terrain) were more likely to experience stock theft. Together, these two factors paint a picture of the most vulnerable farms to livestock theft as those operations that are physically isolated and contain places where thieves can operate without being seen by the owners.

Although not quite statistically significant, farms that were described by their owners as having dense cover (dense trees, scrub etc.) were more likely to be the location of stock theft. Cover confirms the results above, that stock theft was more likely in areas with less visibility.

Only one grazing management practice was found to be significantly related to stock theft. Those graziers who reported experiencing greater discrepancies in stock counts of more than two per cent experienced more theft. This trend occurred more frequently on large outback properties where stock counts are less frequent and stock losses due to natural causes are greater. Trends in the analyses also revealed that farmers who almost always locked their loading ramps and kept their loading ramps stored out of sight of main roads experienced less theft of stock. Limiting access to loading ramps appears to reduce the logistical ability of stock thieves to operate.

The third class of crimes includes malicious damage and the presence of illegal trespassers and shooters. All three have highly similar ecologies. Farms with more dense cover were significantly more likely to experience these crimes. Properties where the main property bordered on a highway were more likely to experience higher levels of all three crimes when compared to agricultural operations without highway borders. Visibility of sheds and buildings to the farm residence was inversely related to the presence of illegal trespassers and shooters, as was the distance from a town. It appears that the ecology for these crimes is an ironic combination of remoteness and accessibility. The farm must be distant from an urban centre, yet be easily accessed from a highway, and as well, have areas that are not visible from the farm residence. This pattern in the data exactly matches the anecdotes relayed to the researchers during the qualitative phase of the study.

Fourth, the dumping of rubbish and waste material is of increasing environmental concern. Rubbish dumping was found to be more prevalent on properties that are unoccupied but in close proximity to a town and a highway. These properties are more vulnerable because they are the nearest places available for the disposal of rubbish outside of towns.

The second important conclusion from this study is the lack of association between security measures and crime. Theoretically, actions taken by farmers are interventions that change the 'micro' (Mazorelle, 2000) ecology of the operation relative to criminal victimisation, presumably by making it more difficult for crime to occur. For example, maintaining fence boundaries should discourage thieves and trespassers. In fact, although there were few statistically significant relationships, most of those that did exist indicated a positive relationship between

precautionary behaviours and crime, which contradicts the basic principles of prevention. However, the qualitative data strongly suggest that most security measures by farmers were reactions to criminal events and as such, did not represent a proactive approach to the prevention of crime. Whether or not these actions do prevent crime, unfortunately, cannot be determined from the present study.

Only one farm security measure was found to be negatively related to crime. The presence of a watchdog reduced the occurrence of break and enter crimes, but no other type of crime. Unlike other types of prevention examined in this study, it can be assumed that the presence of a dog on a farm is not a reaction to crime. Dogs and farms have always gone together, and it is safe to assume that if a respondent indicated owning a dog that was a good watchdog, it had been there longer than the two years reference period for reported crime. The reduction of break and enter crimes and the presence of a dog makes eminent practical sense. Dogs are aware, often before their owners, of the presence of strangers around the farm residence and nearby farm buildings. Burglars are less likely to break into a farm residence or nearby buildings when they know a dog is present. Although most farm dogs function primarily as either pets or work animals, and secondarily for security (if at all), it remains true that within the relatively confined space of the farm residence and nearby buildings, even an ordinary dog can have a deterrent effect. Only future research which takes a more longitudinal approach to farm victimisation, can more closely investigate the effectiveness of preventive actions on the reduction of crime.

The message for farmers is, that rural areas, even remote regions, are not immune from crime. Farmers need to be made more aware of the problem and be more vigilant. Farmers say it's impossible to secure a property. The results of the above analyses would certainly support this. Farmers do not appear to be motivated to attend to locking and securing their properties and ensuring all tools, equipment and machinery are marked with some form of identification. These findings suggest a need for farm security information and programs for farmers designed to encourage behaviour change concerning crime prevention on farms.

# **Chapter Eight**

## **Attitudes about Agricultural Crime**

### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

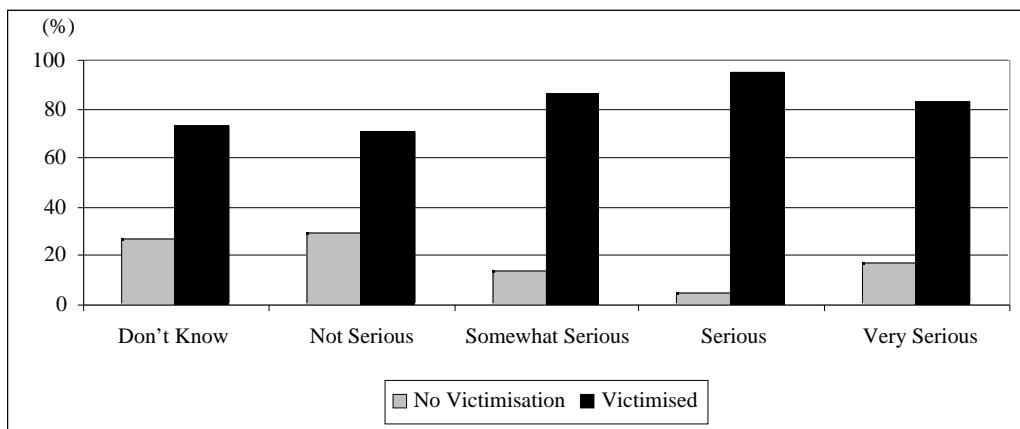
This chapter reports on our investigation on what farmers perceive and believe about agricultural crime. Attitudes are likes and dislikes about objects, people, groups, situations and any other identifiable aspects of the environment. Attitudes are often linked to beliefs about these same aspects of the environment. Furthermore, attitudes can sometimes be linked to actions taken in respect to such beliefs. As human beings strive to be consistent in their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, it is important to investigate people's attitudes when conducting social research (Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith, Bem and Hilgard, 1990). Accordingly, the present study investigated the attitudes of farmers towards agricultural crime. Such attitudes may influence farmers' fear of crime, who or what they blame for crime, and shape their behaviours regarding reporting crimes to police or implementing crime prevention strategies on-farm.

### **8.2 PERCEPTIONS OF TRENDS IN AGRICULTURAL CRIME**

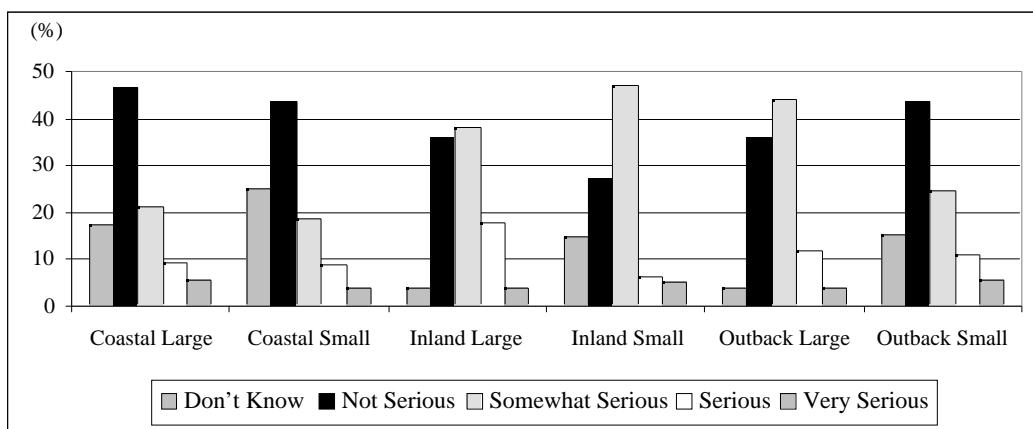
#### **8.2.1 Seriousness of crime**

We began by asking participants to rate the seriousness of crime of farms in their district. Only 13% of respondents described farm crime as serious or very serious, 31% described it as somewhat serious, while 40% thought it was not serious at all. The remainder could not say. Victims of crime were significantly more likely to rate crime in their district as serious ( $\chi^2=17.0$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). (See Figure 8.1).

There was a significant difference between the regions and farm size on perceptions of the seriousness of crime. More respondents (18%) on large inland properties believed farm crime was serious in their region. Others described farm crime as somewhat serious on large outback properties (44%), and both small (46.9%) and large (38%) properties inland. Figure 8.2 displays respondents' perceptions of the seriousness of crime in their local district across the six farm types.



**Figure 8.1: Perceptions of the seriousness of crime by victimisation.**

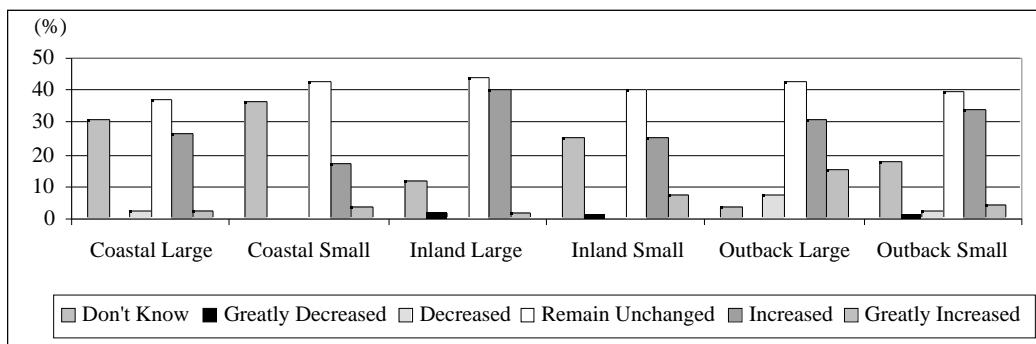


**Figure 8.2: Perceptions of the seriousness of crime across the farm types.**

### 8.2.2 Rising crime

Although most respondents did not consider agricultural crime to be serious, 32% believed there had been an increase in such crimes in their district in the past year while 40% believed it remained much the same. Only 73 (20%) believed there had been a change in the types of farm crime occurring in their district. The majority (25%) believed that there was an increase in petty theft of tools, small items, and radios from tractors. Another 23% believed livestock theft had increased. Others (11%) reported an increase in break and enters while another 11% reported an increase in the theft of machinery. Those respondents who had been victims of crime were significantly more likely to identify an increase in the rate of crime and note a change in the types of crime ( $\chi^2=6.89$ ,  $p<0.008$ ).

A comparison between the geographical regions and farm sizes reveals that the largest proportion of respondents in each region believed levels of farm crime had remained much the same over the past year. However respondents on large inland farms and small outback farms were more likely to report a perceived increase in rates of crime in comparison with other areas (Figure 8.3).



**Figure 8.3: Perceptions of the trends in the rate of crime across the farm types.**

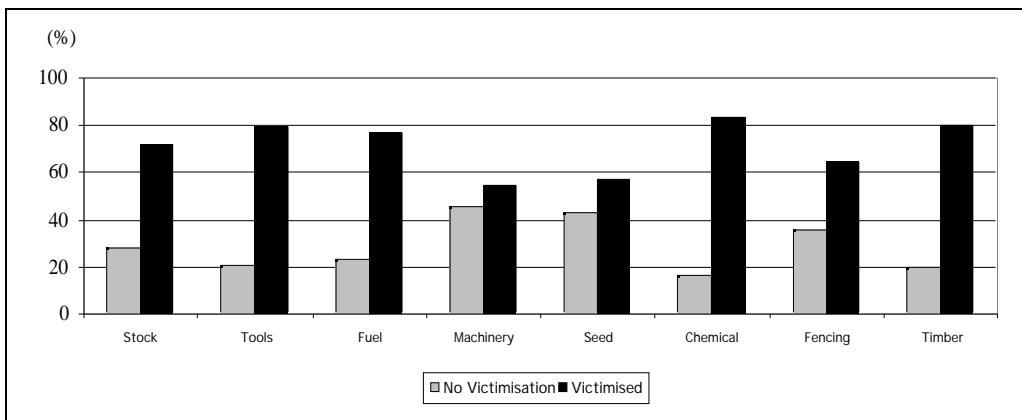
### 8.2.3 Perceptions of crime in the community

We asked whether participants were aware of other farmers in their district experiencing crime. Over 90% responded that they had. The most common types of crime included the theft of tools, livestock and fuel, as well as vandalism, break and enter, illegal trespassers and shooters. Table 8.1 presents the percentages of respondents' perceptions of crime in their district.

**Table 8.1:**  
**Percentage of respondents' perceptions of crime in their district (N=393).**

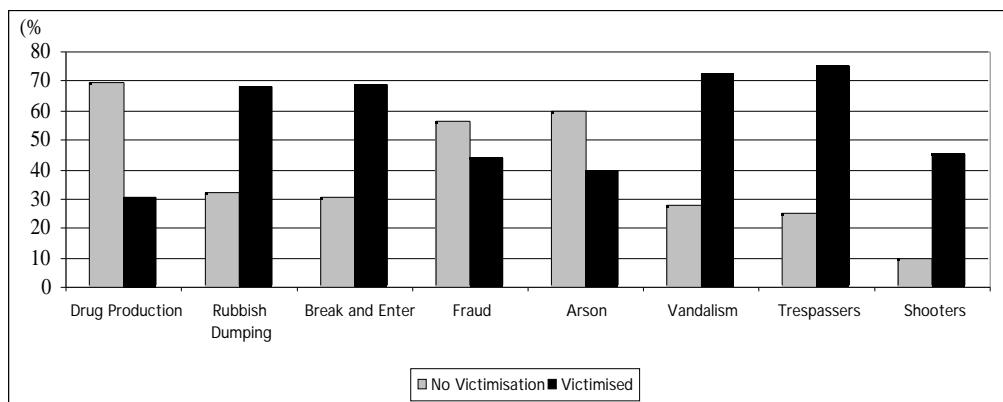
Type of crime	(%)
Theft:	
• Tools and small equipment	63
• Livestock	53
• Fuel	51
• Machinery	29
Vandalism	36
Break and Enter	48
Illegal Trespassers	50
Illegal Shooters	44

Victimisation also has a significant influence on the opinions farmers hold about local trends in farm crime ( $\chi^2=15.54$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). Ninety-four per cent of those who reported an awareness of crime in the district were victims of crime. Parallel findings were observed for the specific types of farm crime victimisation. Figure 8.4 displays the relationship between the respondents' propensity to report awareness of a particular theft in the district if they had also been victims of that type of theft.



**Figure 8.4: Awareness of theft in the district by victimisation by type of theft.**

Figure 8.5 presents the relationship between those farmers who were victims of a crime other than theft and their awareness of similar crimes in the district. Awareness of drug crimes, arson and fraud were the only types of crime that were not affected by previous victimisation. These are crimes that may be discussed widely within rural communities in order to warn others of possible victimisation. Previous studies by the authors revealed an intolerance of drugs within rural communities (Jobes *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, the discovery of drugs on a property would become a hot topic of conversation. Arson also is also something that is abhorrent in rural Australia.



**Figure 8.5: Awareness of crime in the district by victimisation by type of crime.**

### 8.3 ATTITUDES TO POLICING OF AGRICULTURAL CRIMES

Participants were asked a series of questions about the policing of farm crime in their district. Firstly, participants were asked about police staffing levels in their area. Thirty-seven per cent stated there were sufficient numbers of police, while 48% said there were too few police.

One respondent wrote:

*With reductions in staffing in small police stations, the police are too thinly spread to be effective.*

We also asked whether participants thought the police were doing the best job they could against crime on farms in their district. Of those who responded, 14% said 'always', 35% said 'most of the time', 20% said 'not often' and 25% could not say. Participants were also asked if they thought that the police had crime on farms under control in their district. Only 15% believed they did, 36% believed crime was not under control while 46% were unsure. Most (49%), thought there was 'quite a lot of respect for police' amongst farmers in their district, 24% thought there was some respect for police while only 11% disagreed and 14% could not say. One respondent reported:

*Warren Shire has had a particularly good police presence in recent years; young, keen and approachable.*

Another recommended:

*A random visit to farms by police, even for public relations reasons, would serve in giving people more security, confidence and awareness.*

We further asked about farmers' observations of police presence at saleyards, clearing sales or checking transports. Thirty-nine per cent had never observed police at saleyards, 24% reported that police were rarely seen, 20% had sometimes noticed police and only 4% reported frequently seeing police at saleyards. One suggested:

*There should be uniformed police presence at every stock sale and regular checks on the skin and wool brokers and grain merchants.*

Thirty-four per cent had never observed police checking transports, 25% had rarely seen police checking transports, 24% had sometimes observing this activity, while only 6% had frequently observed police checks. As for police presence at clearing sales, 46% reported never seeing police, 22% reported rarely, 15% reported sometimes, while police were frequently seen at clearing sales by only 4% of participants.

Several participants reported that they would appreciate regular information from the police regarding crime in the district. This would make farmers more aware and more attentive to security on-farm, assure the public that the police are doing something and it may send a message to the perpetrators. One farmer suggested a newsletter, including crime information and strategies for crime prevention on farms, could be sent through organisations such as Landcare.

Participants were asked whether they believed increased police patrolling or efforts would reduce levels of farm crime in their district. The majority (43%) believed there would be some reduction, while 21% thought it would be very

effective resulting in a big reduction in crime. Nineteen per cent believed that there would be only a slight reduction and 12% believed that there would be no benefit at all. One respondent appreciated the police presence on patrols.

*The police patrol the valley regularly and have been very good. The only time that I did need them, they came around during the day and at night. I had no further troubles.*

However, another wrote:

*We have three police in our town, but they are usually working out of the big regional town or patrolling for drink drivers Friday and Saturday nights and not patrolling back roads and lanes where often trespassing and property theft take place.*

We investigated participants' beliefs about the adequacy of police knowledge and understanding about agricultural matters to deal with farm crime. An overwhelming 75% believed that police should have special skills and training to deal with crime on farms. Only 11% disagreed and 13% could not say.

#### **Police need knowledge**

**Ken has been experiencing ongoing thefts of sheep from his 5000 ha property in northern New South Wales. On one occasion, his local stock and station agent called him to say that he had recognised some of his lambs going through the local sale yards. Ken asked the local police officer to contact the abattoir and request them to hold the lambs until he was able to get there to identify them. When he arrived, he found the lambs had already been processed as the officer had asked that the sheep be withheld from slaughter. When questioned, the officer could see no difference between a sheep and a lamb.**

#### **8.4 ATTITUDES TOWARDS SAFETY & SECURITY ON-FARM**

Participants were asked to evaluate ten attitude statements pertaining to farm security on a four point likert scale ranging from *Strongly Agree* through to *Strongly Disagree*. Two extra categories: *Don't Know* or *Doesn't Apply*, were provided to accommodate those respondents who chose not to answer the question. The first six attitude statements sought participants' opinions about where the responsibility lay regarding security on farm and the extent participants believed they had some control over their personal and property safety. The last three questions focused upon issues pertaining to the policing of livestock theft. Table 8.2 displays the proportions of responses to the first six attitude statements.

**Table 8.2:**  
**Attitudes of farmers towards the safety and security of their property.**

Attitude Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Crime occurs when property owners or managers do not take sufficient responsibility for safety and security on-farm	13.0	46.8	8.0	25.3	6.9
Farmers should be required by law to put ID numbers on farm machinery and equipment	9.8	35.9	18.6	30.3	5.3
There is little I can do to prevent crime from occurring on my property	5.5	27.9	3.2	55.0	8.4
Farmers should accept that there will be the occasional trespasser or illegal shooter on their property	3.4	27.7	3.9	37.7	27.2
Current laws are adequate to protect my farm property	1.8	25.9	29.6	26.4	16.4
When I am away, I worry about the safety of my property	21.8	52.6	1.6	21.0	3.0
It is a waste of time reporting stock theft as there is little the police can do about it	8.1	29.4	15.6	36.4	10.5

#### 8.4.1 Responsibility

Almost 60% believed responsibility for crime prevention on-farm lay with producers themselves. One participant wrote:

*It is a waste of time to legislate to protect people from themselves.  
 For example, crime happens on properties where there is poor management, long periods of absence from home, and where homes are too close to thoroughfares etc.*

Another reported that some instances of stock theft might also be due to poor management or deliberate mismanagement.

*The manager of a neighbouring farm reported the theft of a truckload of fat lambs near the end of the selling season. The manager had reported very high marking percentages at marking time. My feelings were that the lambs had never been there at all and that the loss had been reported to cover the shortfall in the lamb numbers. Such incidences may not be all that rare.*

#### **8.4.2 Identification**

Forty-five per cent believed there should be legislation in place to ensure that farmers complied with requirements for identification on tools and machinery and other farm equipment. Thirty-six per cent however, would not want to have laws to enforce them to comply with regulations regarding identification of equipment.

#### **8.4.3 Sense of control over crime**

Fifty-three per cent believed there were things they could do on-farm to secure their property and possessions. This is a positive finding for future crime prevention programs for farmers. However, a sizeable 33% believed crime on farms was inevitable and there was little that they could physically do to prevent crime occurring. This sense of helplessness was evident within interviews with farmers. Several commented that it is impossible to secure a property.

#### **8.4.4 Attitudes to illegal trespassers and shooters**

We asked participants whether they believed that farmers should accept that there will be the occasional trespasser or illegal shooter on their property - 62% strongly disagreed with this statement. As one farmer said:

*How would you feel if you came home one day and found a four-wheel-drive on your front lawn, people having a barbecue in your yard, swimming in your pool, trampling your garden beds and your pet dog had run away.*

Another described the damage that can occur:

*The trespasses entered my property by either of two gates that I now have locked. They were in four-wheel drives. My cows calve in this paddock and I considered this act an invasion of security to my stock. I told them to leave. I have had livestock grids vandalised. The total damage caused to the grids would be in the vicinity of several hundred dollars for repairs and labour.*

#### **8.4.5 Legislation**

A large proportion of respondents (49%) did not believe the laws relating to agricultural crime were adequate to protect farmers. A further 30% were unsure. One respondent wrote:

*The penalties for most crime are nothing short of a joke. If these were increased dramatically, crime would be reduced to a manageable level.*

Another added:

*The laws in NSW make it hard for police to catch farm thieves. Laws aren't sufficient enough about trespass.*

One other wrote:

*There needs to be changes in the court system. Police catch the criminals and the courts let them go. There is no support for the police.*

Others blamed the lack of understanding of rural issues by magistrates:

*Magistrates are the weak links. The law is probably adequate but all a cattle thief caught in the act has to say is "I thought the stock were mine" and the magistrate lets them walk. Magistrates can't tell one beast from another so they think no one else can!*

Only two victims of crime that we interviewed had successfully prosecuted an offender. One woman, who had twenty cattle stolen, was successful in seeing a conviction. The offender on an adjoining property admitted to the theft and received a \$3,000 fine and a three-year bond. Ten of the cattle were returned and the owner received \$6,000 in compensation. In the owner's opinion: *The police were great and so was the magistrate.*

Another producer had \$40,000 worth of goats stolen from his property in the north of the state. The thefts occurred over three days while he was away from his property. He returned to find the fence down and the goats missing. The police found some stock in the south, but most were sold in Queensland. He added:

*I used the media to publicise the issue. The bloke who bought them realised with the publicity that they were stolen so he traded them to another bloke who was known to police. They were all eventually charged. The police were terrific but the magistrate only awarded the offenders 200 hours of community service and there was no compensation for my losses. There is no incentive to report crimes. The offenders should also have been charged for cruelty to animals; the kids were left behind.*

#### **8.4.6 Level of concern about crime**

We also sought to gather an understanding of the participants' levels of fearfulness regarding the safety and security of their property. Seventy per cent admitted they worried about the safety of their property when they were away for any length of time.

#### **8.4.7 Reporting livestock theft**

To compliment the questions regarding the non-reporting of crime, a statement was included to assess the reporting behaviour of farmers regarding livestock theft in particular. Almost 38% agreed it was a waste of time reporting stock theft because there is little the police can do. However, 47% believed it was important to report thefts.

#### **8.4.8 Attitudes to livestock prevention initiatives**

Three additional attitude statements focused on initiatives that could curtail the incidence of livestock theft.

**Table 8.3:**  
**Attitudes to livestock prevention initiatives.**

Attitude Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Transported Stock Statements (TSS) are essential in controlling stock theft in this State	24.1	40.9	17.1	12.2	5.7
The National Livestock Identification Scheme is essential to reducing stock theft	26.1	39.9	21.3	10.0	2.7
A specialised Police Stock Squad is essential to combat stock theft	40.8	41.6	13.2	2.7	1.6

#### **8.4.9 Transported Stock Statements (TSS)**

The first question sought participants' opinions on the Transported Stock Statements (TSS) as a means of controlling livestock theft. The majority (65%) agreed with the need for legislation such as the TSS to control stock movements and therefore stock theft. However, those that disagreed believed there was a need for stricter controls on the accessibility of TSS forms. For example, the forms are available to anyone via the Internet. Several participants called for a return to the tighter regulations that were in place in the past. The following are comments made by producers regarding the TSS:

*...There is a need for TSS forms to track stock but it is still not the total answer. Thieves can write out their own TSS forms. There is a need to follow Queensland's tighter standards.*

*...The present transported stock statement system is a total farce. The system of books with duplicates held on farm and at RLPB Offices was of some value both as deterrent and for future evidence in the case of following up stock movement and prosecution.*

*....Transported stock permits don't work as they are too readily available and are easily falsified.*

*... A thief can have his own truck, load it with stolen sheep or cattle, fill in the permit to match the stock, and head off to the sale yard. If pulled up by the police, the earmarks, ear tags and brands match the permit. The police have done their job properly and everything is done correctly but the stock are gone.*

*...The owner, an agent or a carrier can complete the TSS but it should be just the owner or agent. As it stands, a carrier can have details on his own form and it is acceptable if the details are the same as required on the TSS forms.*

*...The old permits were great. They had to be in triplicate and you had to get them from the police, registered stock and station agents and R.L.P. Boards. Farmers had to get a permit every time they wanted one. They also had to get a permit endorsed for night travel.*

#### **8.4.10 National Livestock Identification Scheme**

Most respondents (66%) were strongly supportive of the introduction of a National Livestock Identification Scheme. One farmer maintained:

*The solution to stock theft is the National Livestock Identification scheme. You would only need to have a rumen bolus in a random ten to twenty sheep in a mob or five or six cows. The costs are high but it costs to mark lambs. Over a big mob the costs would spread out. It would be more costly for those farmers with small numbers. But if everyone participates in the scheme the costs will come down.*

Another stated:

*We need a National Livestock Identification Scheme with a National Data Base in place and scanners at all feedlots, abattoirs and saleyards as well as hand-held scanners for highway patrols. However, there will still be ways for thieves to get around it. A thief could pretend to be employee saying they are delivering stock. Owners will need to inform the saleyard if they are not delivering stock personally. There is a need for strict guidelines on how this will run.*

One wrote:

*We need this system in New South Wales as soon as possible. The rumen pellet offers the highest form of security. The tamper proof design of the pellet eliminates the problems associated with traditional tags such as tags being lost or stolen.*

*But all states need to get together nationally to save costs by working in unison to solve the problems within the livestock industry. As yet, neither saleyards nor slaughter yards are required to install scanners. There are far greater checks on pawnshops over goods worth a fraction of the cost of stock being stolen. One other concern is that all stock that are micro-chipped are to carry a tag to indicate that they are, which will alert thieves to the necessity to remove electronic ear tags.*

#### **8.4.11 Police Stock Squad**

An overwhelming 82% believed it was necessary to have a designated Police Stock Squad in place to control livestock theft in New South Wales. Specialised officers with knowledge and an interest in rural crime, such as those in place in Queensland, need to be located in each Local Area Command in rural areas to coordinate and focus upon the reduction of farm crime. One stock and station agent strongly believed that the stock squad should be reinstated. He added:

*Police need more power to act - to have warrants to go onto properties and search. Ex agents would make good stock squad members. We need police who know the issues.*

### **8.5 BLAME**

Respondents were asked whom or what they blamed for crime on farms in their district. Responses were many and varied but there were some apparent themes.

#### **8.5.1 Unemployment**

The most common response cited by 13% of the respondents, identified unemployment as the underlying cause of crime. One wrote:

*I don't believe rural crime is any different to the increase in urban crime (though probably it has not increased at the same rate). In the past 'school leavers' found rural work or left the land to find work. I have noticed that in recent years some 'school leavers' stay at home and if unemployed, they can cause problems. There are many more young unemployed people on the land than there were even five years ago. I'm not 'blaming' the economy at all. I am blaming the dole and the recipients attitudes to work (in many cases).*

Another reported:

*Government social security handouts lead to very mobile unemployed individuals with too much time (e.g. Pig chasers and their mates). All drive big four-wheel-drives, they cover huge distances and know where the easy pickings are.*

### **8.5.2 Drug money**

A further 7% of respondents blamed the need for money for criminal activity. Another 11% blamed the increasing drug problem in rural areas as the cause of much of the crime problem. The need for cash to support a drug addiction was blamed for petty theft in particular. Seven per cent blamed local youth and boredom.

### **8.5.3 The environment**

Eight others (2%) thought it was the isolation of many rural properties that made them vulnerable to crime. Three per cent thought farm crime was mostly opportunity crime. Properties bordering a main road were the most vulnerable. Five respondents (1.5%) blamed the lack of supervision on properties caused by absentee landowners; the increasing need for off farm work; or the reduction in farm labour. Others (2%) added that properties are often left unsecured and were more vulnerable to crime. Another 4% believed that as there were no real deterrents, crime on farms was too easy to get away with.

### **8.5.4 Outsiders**

Eight per cent believed non-locals; seasonal workers or outsiders passing through the community perpetrated crime. One wrote:

*Without wanting to condemn cotton chippers in general, there is an element there that is partial to a tank full of free petrol if it is available.*

Others (5%) believed that illegal shooters, namely pig shooters, were obvious culprits. Four per cent blamed professional cattle rustlers, or organised criminals with ready markets for stolen goods.

### **8.5.5 Locals**

Another 4% believed crime was committed by local people who have the knowledge necessary to commit a crime. Five per cent believed these local criminals dealt in stolen goods and were usually known to police. Two per cent observed that urban crime was now a part of rural communities. Another eight respondents (2%) mentioned the lack of police in rural areas to control crime.

A further 2% noted the availability of cheap rental accommodation on farms, which attracts an unsavoury element from the cities.

One respondent, located in a remote region in western New South Wales, reported:

*The local one teacher school was about to close because of a lack of children, so the community advertised in Sydney for families to take advantage of cheap rent in the country. These families arrived all unemployed, and there is no opportunity for work around here. Some of these people are real low life and steal from farmers in the district.*

### **8.5.6 Neighbours**

Six per cent believed neighbours were often the perpetrators. One person observed that some farmers who have lost their properties as a result of the drought and economic downturn are quite resentful and may be to blame for some livestock theft. Interviews with farmers suggested that some neighbourhood disputes could be blamed on poor farming practices.

One respondent reported:

*We have one neighbour who is just slack. We ride the fences regularly as we always have his cattle in our paddock because the feed is better and the fence is fifty years old. Nobody trusts him in the district. They all say that if cattle go into his place you never see them again. Yet people like him and we all socialise together. He buys and sells cattle all the time so he may not readily recognise a neighbour's cattle amongst his.*

One producer in the far west of the State described how easy it is for problems to occur.

*We never get a clean muster. We write off losses to natural causes. If you are running 20,000 sheep, you expect to muster only 19,000. Sometimes we get a surprise when 80 walk out of the scrub later on. It's hard when you are mustering a 38,000-acre paddock sorting your stock from the neighbours. Sometimes a two-year old beast will miss being tagged or branded. It could be yours or it could be your neighbours. It is easier if each property has a different breed of stock. The majority of rural people are decent and honest and return the strays to their owners. Occasionally we shear a neighbour's sheep, so we give them the fleece. Often there is a swap with killers but this can be an understanding between neighbours. We have two cows that are always in the neighbour's block. We would have to drive them 27 miles back – it's not worth the trouble.*

He has made copies of his ear tags for his neighbour's records and has a copy of theirs:

*It's good to have a copy of the neighbour's brands hanging up behind the door but it's hard to get all the neighbours to do the same. Police have leather copies of all ear tags in district but the mark on a sheep's ear is not the same as on leather, for example ) ) or ( ( or 77 or << can be easily confused on a sheep's ear. Marks can be put in upside down or back the front. Sometimes kids do the ear marking. Shearers' nicks plus wear and tear damage marks. We will not buy sheep if the marks are at all similar to our neighbours.*

He went on to describe other problems, which are sometimes attributed to theft:

*One neighbour (who is not the best manager) only musters his sheep once a year. He had a mob of sheep of 1100 and only mustered 68. You would think theft but its blowflies. Police say if you find 10 sheep dead at a tank there are 100 dead in a paddock. Bad managers have to blame something else. Absentee landowners have no idea of the difficulties in managing stock. Even when we muster and crutch sheep, we lose some with movement.*

### **Neighbourhood Dispute**

For the past seventeen years, Ellen has run a 1700-acre mixed farming enterprise in central New South Wales with the help of her son. She has incurred repeated losses of cattle at the hands of her neighbour. It took some time before she realised what was occurring until a consistent pattern emerged. Losses occurred twice a year, usually mid year and around Christmas when calves had just been weaned. Usually there were 30 stock taken at a time - her profit for the year. She checks her stock daily and is always finding her stock on the neighbour's property. When confronted, he claimed the stock had wandered. However, on several occasions she has found calves in his yards that were yet to be weaned. It is unlikely that calves would stray from their mothers. She has taken to just going onto the neighbour's property and bringing the stock back. She runs Angus and Angus-Charolais cross cattle, which are quite distinctive and very uniform in colour. The neighbour used to have Herefords but has now changed to the same breed as hers.

There is a long boundary fence between her property and the offending neighbour. The country is bushy and rugged and the neighbour blamed kangaroos for damaging the fence creating gaps for stock to wander. Yet her stock had good feed. Nevertheless, she decided to strengthen and repair the fence. The offender would not assist with the repair or pay the \$1000 share of the cost.

### **Neighbourhood Dispute (continued)**

Ellen discussed the problem with other neighbours who also reported they had lost stock. Consultation with the previous owners of her property revealed that they had also found that if stock went onto the neighbour's property, they never returned. She has reported the thefts to police, but very little has been done. She was informed that she would need to catch the neighbour in the act. Subsequent calls to the police station have found the officers never available. She has felt as if she has been dismissed which makes her very angry. To make matters worse, the offender has blackened her name in the community, casting doubts about her ability as a farm manager.

Another participant reported the persistent theft of stock at the hand of a neighbour. He had reported the thefts to police but had received no satisfaction. He was dismissed by the offender, the community, and the police as a poor farm manager who was ultimately responsible for losing stock. He appealed to the NSW Police Internal Affairs to no avail. He believes he has been greatly wronged and whether or not he has been a victim of theft, his story demonstrates the impact of community dynamics on such events.

### **Credibility in the Community**

Barry runs sheep and cattle on 12,000 acres in the north west of the state and has been farming in the district for thirty years. He also has a full time job with a government department in the neighbouring town. The property is close to town with roads on two sides. There are two neighbours. One paddock loses stock on a regular basis. One or two cattle per year and 100 to 153 sheep per year go missing, usually 40 at a time. This is accounting for 5% of losses due to natural causes. He has had no trouble with other neighbours or on another block of land he leases in that area or with any stock he has placed on agistment. He counts stock every second day. He has only reported 10% of the thefts because he believes it is a waste of time reporting.

*The police have ignored my reports of theft and have said that I have to prove the sheep were mine. The police did not listen to both sides nor did they take into account the circumstances. The criminal party made so much fuss that we had the police saying they must be innocent. We actually found our livestock on the neighbour's property as a result of observing a lamb sold. We were required to pay a fee for mustering the stock. There were some shearers who witnessed the thefts and told us about the thefts, but they refused to give evidence. They get intimidated. There is a fair bit of 'Rural Mythology' that allows these matters to be glossed over.*

The police concluded that the stock probably strayed because Barry has a full time job and was away from the property much of the time. They claimed the loss of his stock was a likely result of his poor managerial practices and inadequate fencing.

### **Credibility in the Community (continued)**

Barry took the neighbour to court because he had not paid his share of the fencing between the two places. Although the case was successful, he recovered only one-third of the costs actually claimed. The neighbour has spread rumours to try to isolate the victim from the community. His credibility in the community was played against the victim's:

*The neighbour painted my name in the community as a bad farmer and therefore I deserve to have stock stolen. The neighbour has a high standing in the community and the police know him well. He threatened me with a defamation suit for accusing him of theft. There was a lot of social pressure to maintain the peace combined with pressure to exclude us from the community. People tell you not to talk about it and that it's not worth the hassle. You have to get on with neighbours and maintain good will. A bad neighbour is a real liability - a good neighbour is everything.*

*Thefts are very hard to prove. Farmers have to be systematic about record keeping and document everything. We really need a guide about what to do when it happens. We need more information about the laws and what type of information is needed to establish proof. There needs to be a dedicated stock squad officer. Police need to be critical of what they are told and check the facts. They are told lies all the time, so they have to check systematically around all the neighbours and check information.*

### **8.5.7 Farm employees**

Two per cent believed former farm employees, who may have a grudge against their former boss, or may simply use the knowledge of the property, often perpetrated farm crime. One vineyard owner wrote:

*...A week after hand picking using unknown people, our vineyard shed was broken into and \$6,000-worth of equipment was stolen, locks damaged, and keys stolen. The next night, the cellar door was broken into, locks damaged, no money found, nothing was taken.*

*...A casual employee took my wallet, personal papers and large sum of money (\$1200 in the wallet) from my vehicle. I had my suspicions but no proof but I reported it to police.*

## Farm Employees

Cathy and her father own a 20,000 acre property in the rugged mountain areas in the New England district. They discovered a once trusted employee had been stealing stock, one or two at a time over a period of five years:

*We kept a good count. We expect to lose five to ten animals through normal causes. Its rough bushland and we muster three times a year. We have very good neighbours. If they find our cattle on their section, they muster them and ear mark them for us until we catch up with them to brand them. The cattle are quiet and would be easy to steal.*

Their local agent rang when he recognised their stock going through the saleyards. They reported the theft to police but as the cattle were unbranded, they were unable to prove theft:

*So we called a conciliatory meeting with the thieves and confronted them. One person admitted receiving the stolen cattle but the actual thief got the money from the sale of the stock. They promised to give the money to a local charity but that has never happened. The police were informed but nothing was done.*

They discussed their problems with neighbours who were all very supportive. They discovered most people have been affected by crime. This was something they were unaware of until they started discussing it. Cathy herself fired the employee, which caused a backlash from the community:

*The worst outcome was the hurt and loss of trust. The ex-employee's wife was well respected in community. The local solicitor wouldn't help us because he knew the employee's family too well. People wouldn't talk to me, they - ignored me, you could feel the tension in the air. His mates accused me of unfairness, how he worked hard for us in remote conditions. Yet we paid him well gave him a bull for his cattle, loaned him horses etc. Some people came to us to ask for the real story. We found out who were our genuine friends. But it has been very hard for us.*

To get back into the community she sponsors functions in town:

*I have bouncers with our business logo so that people know we won't be walked over. But we shouldn't have to do it. Most people are supportive now. They wont openly discuss the issue but they imply support in their conversation.*

As a consequence they now do more of the farm work themselves. It has also made her less trusting of people and they are now very careful about who they employ.

*I am pleasant with all in the community but I keep information to myself. I don't tell anyone when I am away and we don't have mail delivered to the farm. We now hand keys to employees and maintain a working relationship only with them.*

The ex-employee is now employed by another farmer in the district:

*When I asked the farmer if he had lost any stock, he said he has some vealers taken but he blamed another person in the district. My father told me not to accuse his new worker, as he must be aware of the gossip in the community. If he is too silly to listen to that, he deserves to have stock knocked off. We have to ignore it, as we don't want to make an enemy of him. I know the employee will ingratiate himself with his new boss before stealing from him.*

### Farm Employees (continued)

*My father reckons that in his day, 1950-60s, they were gentlemen thieves. The neighbour then, was a bad manager and thieves only took the cattle that were left, the ones the manager was too lazy to muster. Transport systems nowadays make it much easier for thieves to get the stock away quickly. Theft in the old days was for food and to live on. Today it is needed for money or to support habits such as alcohol, and gambling. However, the children of old thieves still carry on the tradition around here.*

#### **But there were some current thefts that appeared to be ‘socially acceptable’:**

*One bloke here is in the midst of a divorce and steals stock to pay his wife out. Nobody gets involved in that even though most people know about it. The thefts occur on a property where there is a company manager stealing the stock - this thief goes in there afterwards and takes more stock. These directors who thieve stock leave themselves wide open to theft. The property has lost 800 cattle over 15 years.*

## 8.6 REACTION TO VICTIMISATION

It was notable that survey questions asking victims of farm crime to briefly describe their experience invoked emotional responses. This was surprising as the typical image of Australian farmers is one of being tough, self-reliant, and not given to discussing personal feelings. One described the experience as ‘most frightening’ while others talked about feeling disgusted, violated and very angry. One wrote: *I feel defensive and betrayed. I've lost trust in people.*

Similarly another respondent wrote: *I was upset and angry for quite a long time and am now suspicious of everyone.* Several mentioned the frustration involved with knowing there was little hope of property being returned. Others noted the financial losses and the inconvenience of loosing vital equipment.

Some were appalled by the injustice of such criminal activity against the farming population. One woman stated: *Crime on farms is just ‘miserable’, farmers are struggling themselves.*

Another wrote:

*... Every time I read or hear about theft of stock or machinery on farms it makes me feel a little angry towards the ‘bastards’ that would steal from people who don’t make a great net income, and who often struggle with nature and politicians to do so, and are the backbone of the food chain in this country.*

Those we interviewed were also asked what were the ramifications of the victimisation for them personally and professionally. One grazier who had lost 92 head of his breeding cattle valued at \$62,000, talked about the frustration of realising that nothing would be done about it. Although a year has passed since the theft, there are still no clues. Although he reported the thefts to police, he was never confident that the police would be successful in apprehending the offenders. He added:

*I felt hurt, violated and that my personal space had been invaded. There is all that lost time and effort in raising stock. If I think what those cattle would be worth today... but you have to put it behind you and move on. Initially, I felt like getting out but what would I do? I like what I do. I thought I would just blunder along. Fortunately, the Primary Industry Bank has been very supportive.*

Another grazier in the southern part of the state had incurred ongoing losses of sheep and was experiencing self doubt. He stated:

*Our records are pretty good but I often find 20 to 40 missing after accounting for deaths - perhaps a ute load. Losses occur in January through crutching and between lambing and marking in spring. Losses during lambing seem much higher than I can account for. I am suspicious of some in the district but I can't prove it. It's a worry, if they take a ute load now, what's next?*

*It's a real wear and tear on your emotional health - I can't plan properly. We check the stock daily and count stock over and over but what if it's just my bad management. Its soul destroying and it niggles away at me. If I don't know how many sheep I have in a paddock, what sort of manager am I?*

## 8.7 FEAR OF CRIME

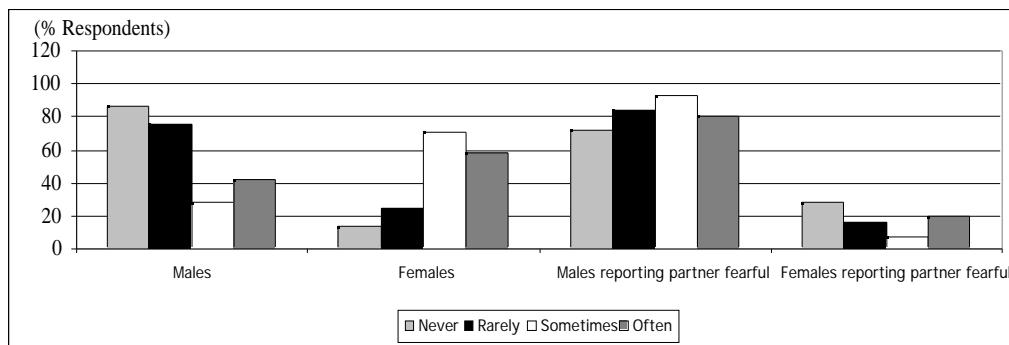
Previous studies by the authors found some farm women were fearful for their personal safety when home alone on their properties particularly at night (Jobes, *et al.*, 2000). This was a surprising finding given the common perception of rural life as being relatively free of crime (O'Connor and Gray, 1990). However, the isolation of farmhouses comes with an awareness that if the occupants were attacked, there would be no one to come to their aid. Stories of attacks on persons can travel widely within a rural community. Such fears are also perpetuated by the memory of the horrendous murder of Virginia Morse in Collarenebri in 1974 by two men. The ferocity and inhumanity of this murder still shocks most Australians. This was demonstrated in the recent public and political rejection of an appeal for early release by one of the offenders. To explore levels of fear of crime amongst farm families, the survey included a question asking participants to rate how unsafe they, their partners, and their children felt when home alone on their property. Responses were recorded on a four-point scale ranging from never through to often. Table 8.4 displays the degree of fearfulness expressed by participants for themselves and their families. While the majority of respondents

reported feeling very safe on their properties, a sizeable number reported feeling insecure.

**Table 8.4:**  
**Participant's reports of fear of crime in their families.**

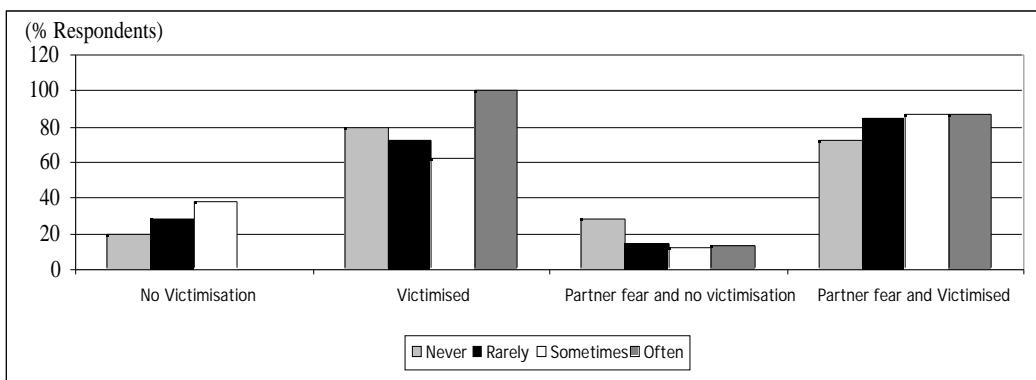
Fear of Crime	% Often	% Sometimes	% Rarely	% Never
Respondent	3.2	6.3	22.4	68.2
Partner	4.5	24.0	29.7	41.7
Children	5.3	21.6	29.5	43.6

No significant differences were found between the age of respondents and fear of crime. However, significantly more female respondents reported being fearful than males ( $\chi^2=53.45$ ,  $p<0.00001$ ). Significantly more respondents reported their female partners to be fearful than male partners ( $\chi^2=15.056$ ,  $p<0.002$ ). Figure 8.6 displays the proportion of reported fearfulness by gender.



**Figure 8.6: Fear of crime by gender.**

Fear of crime was also related to the victimisation experiences of respondents. Chi square analysis could not be validated because there were missing data in one cell. However, a trend is evident of greater fear amongst respondents and their partners where the property had been victimised (See Figure 8.7).



**Figure 8.7: Fear of crime by victimisation.**

Table 8.5 shows the responses regarding fear of crime across the six property sizes. A significant difference was found between the respondents' level of fear on large and small farms ( $F^2=11.881$ ,  $p<0.008$ ). Respondents on smaller farms reported significantly more fear than those on larger farms. However, this result may be an artefact of smaller farms within the sample having the larger proportion of female respondents.

**Table 8.5:**  
**Fear of crime across the six property sizes.**

Region & Farm Size	% Never		% Rarely		% Sometimes		% Often	
	Respondent	Partner	Respondent	Partner	Respondent	Partner	Respondent	Partner
<b>Coastal</b>								
Large (N=77)	76.3	44.9	59.1	19.7	34.8	22.7	2.6	17.4
Small (N=84)	62.8	47.7	39.0	19.2	23.1	26.8	15.4	21.5
<b>Inland</b>								
Large (N=50)	75.5	37.0	37.5	18.4	34.8	34.4	4.1	23.9
Small (N=82)	63.8	36.5	40.0	26.3	31.7	24.4	2.5	27.0
<b>Outback</b>								
Large (N=26)	80.8	46.2	47.4	19.2	23.1	31.6	0	26.9
Small (N=73)	60.6	39.1	39.1	28.2	28.1	29.1	8.5	29.7
<b>Large Farms</b>								
Small Farms	76.8	42.6	49.5	19.2	32.6	28.4	2.6	21.3
Total (N=393)	62.4	41.1	39.4	24.5	27.6	30.3	8.7	26.0
	68.2	41.7	43.6	22.4	29.7	29.5	6.3	24.0
								21.6
								3.2
								4.5
								5.3

Fear of crime was evident in some of the interviews with farm women. Even in areas described as a close supportive community, some people still reported a degree of fear of crime at the hands of people passing through the district.

### Just Cautious

**Les and Marie are in their seventies and have been on their property for 47 years. The community is very friendly and supportive with neighbours frequently helping each other with labour and equipment. Although they have never experienced crime, they are aware of some thefts in the district and news in the media of home invasions makes them nervous about being home alone at night. Marie stated:**

*Sometimes there are noises at night and your mind plays a trick. I find I listen for noises. Sometimes I go and check the sheds but I wouldn't know what I'd do if I found someone. I think we are sitting targets because we are elderly. Our property is isolated down a back road. That could make it safer but it could also be an inducement. Les always sleeps with the windows shut in case someone breaks in. I don't - if people want to get in they will. We just have to be realistic, crime happens in rural areas. We just have to be cautious.*

In outback areas, illegal shooters and trespassers are a source of anxiety as they invariably carry knives, firearms and own savage dogs. One farmer wrote:

*We do not know the best way to address the problem of pig chasers. The police are also powerless. It seems to be a growing trend and if confronted they are angry young people whom we find can be intimidating and ignore our requests to not enter the property without permission.*

Another added:

*We have sometimes left fuel out in a paddock that we know will be taken by shooters that we have warned off our property. We would rather fuel be taken than have a tractor severely vandalised.*

Others experienced high levels of fear as a result of ongoing victimisation.

### Repeated Victimisation

**Jane and her husband have a 32,000-acre property in outback New South Wales producing sheep, goats, and cattle. They have experienced several thefts valued at \$35,000 in recent years. Jane stated:**

*There are always people on our property trapping feral goats. It's impossible to secure the property - every time we muster we see tyre tracks. There is so much dense scrub, people could be three or four metres away and you wouldn't see them. I feel vulnerable when I am mustering alone and I always carry a gun.*

### **Repeated Victimisation (continued)**

The major thefts involved the loss of 900 sheep, 100 Boer goats and 20 head of cattle. The sheep and goats were breeding stock and all were pregnant at the time. The offender is well known in the district and lives in a small town nearby. Because they reported the thefts to police and named the suspect, the family has been subject to ongoing threats and intimidation. In one extreme example, the family discovered one of their rams slaughtered and spread over the gateway to their property:

*We never speak to the people in town. We hardly ever socialise and when we do we are guarded in our conversation. We never tell anyone about the successes on the property or any new innovations that we may be trying. We never tell any one we are going away and we never leave the place unattended.*

**The family has recently sold the property and plans to leave the district.**

## **8.8 SAFE COMMUNITIES**

With so many reports of neighbourhood disputes, we were interested to understand the proportion of participants who believed they lived in communities where there was a strong sense of community, where neighbours were supportive and were alert to suspicious activities in the area. The survey revealed that 87 (22%) experienced no crime in their lifetime of farming. One farmer wrote:

*I believe that theft – stock theft in the district to be almost nonexistent. Most crime would probably fit into the opportunity type. It would appear most station folk here have a healthy respect for their neighbours and keep an eye out for suspicious activity and are more likely to do a good turn than take anyone down.*

One woman who had properties in two separate districts noted the difference in the communities:

*In one, the neighbours are terrific. They close your gates if they see them open and there is an informal neighbourhood watch. In the other community we were outsiders - graziers amongst farmers - the neighbours there would open the gate wider!*

Participants were asked, ‘If your neighbours observed some suspicious activities on your property, would they advise you or call the police?’ The majority, (72%) believed that their neighbours would let them know if there was a problem, while 21% believed some of their neighbours would contact them. Only seven respondents (2%) reported that their neighbours would ignore suspicious activities while twenty (5%) were unsure what their neighbours would do. Twenty-nine per cent reported their neighbours would probably call the police if they saw something suspicious in the neighbourhood. Another 29% thought some of their neighbours would call the police. Seventeen per cent reported that their neighbours would not contact police and another 24% could not say. Some

respondents commented on the loss of community due to social changes within rural Australia.

*There are a number of non-resident farmers in our district because they live on the coast or in the Sydney area. Five properties adjoining us have no one living on the property. Communication with neighbours has broken down over the past six to eight years, dramatically. We never see neighbours. Some properties are subdivided.*

We sought participants' awareness or participation in community crime prevention programs, such as *Neighbourhood Watch* and *Rural Watch*. Only 52 (14%) reported they were actively involved in some type of crime prevention program. Thirty per cent belonged to a *Neighbourhood Watch* group and the remainder participated in *Rural Watch* groups. Thirty-nine per cent reported there were no such formalised groups in their district. Only 42 (11%) reported that they knew of community groups that had formed to deal with rising farm crime in the district. The majority of these groups (62%) were *Neighbourhood Watch* groups and 23% were *Rural Watch* groups. Two others described themselves as 'Farm Watch' groups and four others were local action groups.

### **Community Watch**

George is a long time resident of a 3600 acre family farm in the Blue Mountains area producing beef, sheep, wool and horses. He reported two incidences of theft of tools and equipment. He and his neighbours are concerned about crime, which seems to occur in spates in the area. The most frequent thefts are of tools, fuel and alcohol. The district being close to Sydney has many hobby farms and weekend farms. Thus there are many absentee landowners and properties are vulnerable to theft because they are unattended much of the time. George stated:

*The police were very supportive at the time of the theft on my place although nothing eventuated. The local officer is determined to wipe out the problems in district and conducts patrols in an unmarked car. He visits farmers, talks to them and is well respected in the community.*

**He believes crime has worsened over his time in farming:**

*With so much new subdivision in the district and the general urbanisation of rural areas, there are more people about which brings problems. For such a small community there are so many people I do not know. It's harder to recognise a strange vehicle and it's easier for criminals to get away with crime.*

### **Community Watch (continued)**

**He is in charge of a local neighbourhood watch group associated with the local bush fire brigade and has discussed this problem with his well known and trusted neighbours. They are cautious about what they discuss with newcomers, as they fear being the next target of crime. George maintained:**

*The thieves have got some 'cockies' in the district keeping an eye out. The neighbours keep a watch out for suspicious activities and strange vehicles and do report information to police because they believe it's important. A good vigilant community is only as good as the people within it.*

**His strategy for crime prevention on his property is to always have someone on the property at all times, and keep irregular hours so that people do not know when they come or go, or where they will be on the property.**

## **8.9 SUMMARY**

This chapter examined the subjective attitudes and opinions held by farmers on a range of issues relating to crime on farms. Farmers generally do not regard crime on farms as serious. However, those who had been victims of crime were more likely to rate crime as serious and were more aware of crimes occurring on other farms in their district. Those in the inland regions appeared more concerned about crime. Most participants believed crime had increased, particularly the thefts of tools, equipment, machinery and livestock.

There appears to be widespread respect for police in rural Australia. This finding is similar to that found in previous studies of rural communities by the authors (Jobes *et al.*, 2001). Respondents believed the police are doing a good job although there was an appreciation that they are short staffed. However, most did not believe police had the problem of crime on farms under control. The majority called for a greater police presence at sale yards, clearing sales, patrolling rural roads, and checking stock transports. The majority believed police officers needed to have skills and training in the agricultural industries to effectively deal with agricultural crime. The example given demonstrated how damaging the lack of police knowledge could be. However, it is expecting a great deal of police officers to have a thorough knowledge of all the intricacies of the agricultural industry, which are wide and varied. Police do not have an in-depth knowledge of all the other crimes they must deal with. Farmers should be encouraged when reporting crimes, to be aware that police may not understand all the issues involved. Likewise, police need guidelines on what questions to ask farmers when taking a report and seek further information to clarify any misunderstandings.

The sample was divided upon the issue of where the responsibility lay for preventing crime on farms. While a larger proportion believed that the responsibility lay with farmers themselves, a sizable proportion portrayed a sense of helplessness in safeguarding their property and possessions. Most respondents objected strongly to the presence of trespassers and shooters on farms and again there was an element of despair in their ability to prevent this occurring. The majority called for tighter legislation regarding agricultural crime along with tougher enforcement of laws within the court system. These perceptions give rise to a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system and do not encourage farmers to report crimes. Australians stereotypically demand a fair go, which usually requires government intervention. Perhaps as a legacy of a convict past, Australians are used to having laws and a government in place to maintain social order. When the order declines, Australians tend to look to government to right the situation.

While most farmers were supportive of the Transported Stock Statements being in place to provide some form of documentation to control stock movements, there was awareness that thieves can easily manipulate the current system. There is clearly a need for tighter regulations regarding the accessibility and availability of the TSS forms. The majority were in favour of the National Livestock Identification Scheme but emphasised the need for full participation by all sale outlets to ensure the system was effective. Almost all believed a police stock squad was necessary to control the problem of stock theft in this state.

Questions about whom or what farmers blamed for crime on farms provided an interesting insight into the understandings and the prejudices of rural people, which can guide future crime prevention strategies. Whether true or not, these perceptions may indicate where the problems may lie in rural communities. Unemployment and drug abuse were the most common social problems cited as the cause of most crime on farms. Similar reasons were given in previous studies of crime in rural communities by the authors (Jobes *et al.*, 2001). While this perception may very well be true, unemployment is universally cited as a cause of crime.

There was awareness that the nature of the environment on farms, isolation and a lack of constant supervision on properties render them more vulnerable to crime. Some respondents believed the perpetrators of crime were outsiders to the community while others believed them to be locals. The problem of neighbourhood disputes is clearly significant for the victims, the community and the police who must intervene in these situations. It is the nature of stock to wander. While the social order of rural communities expects neighbours to cooperate and return stock to their rightful owners when they muster, not all individuals conform to the moral standards. Even where a person is guilty of theft, it is almost impossible to establish guilt because the offender will claim the stock merely strayed.

The emotional impact of agricultural crime on victims was surprisingly strong. The feelings of anger and violation were not dissimilar to any victim of break and enter to a home or business. However, there was an added sense of injustice expressed that the social order of a united, safe, honest and hardworking rural community had been violated. Others blamed themselves and had lost confidence in their ability to manage their properties. Many had suffered significant financial losses as well as the loss of breeding stock. Others were severely inconvenienced by the financial loss and the physical unavailability of valuable tools and equipment. Several victims of crime reported higher levels of fear of crime as a result of victimisation. In particular, there is an urgent need to address the laws of trespass and shooters in this country considering the reports of those farm families who feel threatened by the presence of offenders on their land.

# **Chapter Nine**

## **Interviews with Rural Police**

### **9.1 INTRODUCTION**

So what are the views of police on these issues? Do they consider agricultural crime to be a priority for policing? What problems do they see within the agricultural industry that facilitates crime? These were some of the questions we put to police officers to seek a balanced and more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of agricultural crime. Interviews were conducted with rural police officers from Local Area Commands (LACs) across New South Wales. Additional information was sought from country magistrates with experience in prosecuting agricultural crimes. This chapter provides an overview of the opinions of criminal justice personnel voiced in these interviews.

### **9.2 METHOD**

Permission to conduct interviews with rural police officers was sought from the commanders of 33 rural LAC's in New South Wales. Letters were sent introducing the study and inviting the command to participate. A relevant officer from each LAC was subsequently interviewed by telephone. Some field trips were conducted where the advantage of face-to-face interviews with police was taken. In all, 31 LACs participated in the study and a total of 36 officers were interviewed. Six of the officers located in some coastal areas and regions close to the Sydney metropolitan area, reported that agricultural crime was not an issue in their command as their area included mostly urban centres and only a few dairy farms and hobby farms. These interviews were reduced to a few questions, as most of the issues were not relevant to these officers. One interview was conducted with a member of the Queensland Stock Squad to gather information on the incidence of stock theft in that State, and the problems of policing stolen stock travelling interstate.

Officers' opinions were sought on the extent and type of agricultural crime in their locality, what problems they face in policing such crimes, and what improvements they would like to see within the agricultural industry to reduce the incidence of property crime. The following sections summarise their responses.

## **9.3 THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEM**

Opinions of police officers on the size of the problem of crime on farms in their district were explored. These questions corresponded to those asked of farmers in the study. We began by asking officers what types of agricultural crime were problems in their particular area.

### **9.3.1 Types of crime**

Stock theft was the most frequently reported crime of concern with 48% of officers reporting this as a problem. One added: *The price has gone up and the rewards are great.* The theft of tools, fuel and machinery were noted by 35% of participants. The types of items frequently stolen included chainsaws, whipper snippers, motorbikes, generators, pumps and UHF radios. Officers believed thieves have a ready market for items. One added:

*Goods can be stolen and sold in a day. Chainsaws worth \$1000 are sold for \$100 in the pub. They are easy to sell being too good a bargain to miss.*

One officer in a coastal area reported there were thefts of large machinery and quad bikes, which are never recovered. He believed there was a market in the west of the state for these items.

In other LACs, spates of break and enter to houses, sheds and yards were reported. Officers noted that farmers tend to leave houses and sheds open. In one command, thieves made two trips to remove valuable antiques from a home on a property. Break and enters of farm residences or buildings were reported as the main crime of concern in LACs closer to major cities and within the coastal regions.

Trespassers and shooters were a problem in five LACs. Officers reported that fences are damaged and there are links between the presence of illegal trespassers and shooters and the loss of fuel and stock. One officer noted that new legislation was now in place regarding hunters, which will help police in controlling illegal shooters but he added that legislation would never stop hunters coming onto a property. An officer located in the southwest of the state reported:

*There is a major problem here with shooters from Melbourne who think they have a right to shoot 'wild sheep' in areas where there are no fences.*

Another officer believed there was a need for change in legislation to empower police, and to increase fines and penalties. The current \$50 fine for trespass is no deterrent. Officers reported they currently use all legislation in place to police trespassers and shooters, such as animal welfare, firearms licences, and defective vehicles. One added that legal shooters would have no problem gaining access to properties if they sought permission, as farmers want the wild pigs removed.

Other types of crimes experienced included the theft of wool to the value of \$400,000. In another area, there were two known cases of arson and another two suspected cases of youths lighting fires in paddocks. Small thefts of timber were occurring from local mills. In one other area, farm chemicals were stolen, mostly from local businesses. One coastal area was experiencing some oyster theft. In another coastal region, there were cases of cannabis production found on local properties.

### **9.3.2 Seriousness of the problem**

We asked officers' opinions on the seriousness of crime on farms in their district. Seven participants (35%) described crime on farms as serious. Of these, the majority referred to livestock theft as the main concern. One officer stated: *There is a loss of livelihood and future breeding stock.* He went on to say that, as many crimes are not reported, the true extent of stock theft is unknown.

Two officers in an inland farming area described the problem of rural crime as serious but did not believe it was as serious as other areas. One maintained:

*It's important to weigh the problem against other demands in the community. However, the question remains, what is the correct benchmark to use? When you compare the volume of crime in this region, there have been 135 incidences of theft in the past few months and there were only one or two that occurred on a farm.*

One officer pointed out that all crimes are serious for the victim. Another reported that he has had to deal with several complaints about the failure of police to deal with stock theft from some very frustrated victims. He acknowledged the great difficulty police have in solving these crimes.

Thirty per cent of the participants described farm crime as 'somewhat serious'. Some added that this type of crime was not as serious as people make out. One officer, who was also a part of a family property and had extensive experience in agricultural crime, believed that farm crime was not as serious as media would have people believe. *People are getting hysterical*, he added. *Yes thefts occur in back blocks but compared to urban theft, there is no comparison.* He did admit that stock theft is too easy to get away with and thieves are getting smarter.

Two officers stationed in coastal resort areas where small dairy farms and hobby farms were the principal type of agriculture in the region, did not view rural crime as very serious at all. It was certainly not a priority in their area.

### **9.3.3 Trends in crime**

We asked officers whether they thought that the amount of crime on farms in their district had increased, decreased, or remained much the same over the past year.

Four of the officers believed farm crime had increased. Four others believed that crime levels had remained unchanged.

We then asked whether officers had observed any change in the types of crime in their district over the past five years. Five participants noted an increase in stock theft in their area. Two noted the increase in goat thefts. One added that the increase corresponded to the increasing value of stock. One officer expected cattle thefts to increase with the high prices currently being received and the problems overseas of Foot and Mouth disease and Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) or ‘mad-cow disease’.

Other participants, particularly those in coastal regions, noted the increase in break, enter and steal of farmhouses. Houses left unattended, for example hobby farms that are mostly used on weekends or holidays, are particularly vulnerable. One officer noted that many people leave their homes open and property unsecured. Thefts are large with everything in a home being taken.

One officer predicted that crime in rural areas would become the crime of the future as more and more thieves recognise the ability to get away with crime in rural areas as opposed to urban. Properties in his area are small, often secluded with the house set back from the road. Many owners leave their house and sheds unattended and often unlocked while at off-farm employment or just out in a paddock. He added:

*Thieves can drive up the drive, park their vehicle out of sight of the road and take their time to take what they want. If they find someone home, they usually say they were looking for someone. In urban areas, thieves have to hurry and have more chance of being detected.*

One respondent noted that in his area, there are spates of chemical thefts. Over the shearing season, there can be thefts of cones and cutters, which are hard to trace. In another district, the theft of bull semen was a new type of crime.

Some officers observed the use of clearance sales as a major source of disposal of stolen goods. As agents are not required to put in the same paper work as second hand dealers, a thief can enter the goods as an outside vendor and pocket the cash.

### **9.3.4 Types of offenders**

Participants were asked to describe the typical profile of an offender in their area. Eight participants (40%) described crimes in their area as organised. Several officers agreed that most major crime, particularly large stock thefts and thefts of large machinery, are conducted by organised professional criminals. One officer maintained that there might be only five to ten people who conduct organised stock thefts in the State.

One believed that organised stock theft appropriated local knowledge. Local stockmen are hired as they have all the necessary equipment and local knowledge.

Another agreed, describing the *modus operandi* of stock thieves as operating at night, using local knowledge and driving enclosed trucks or a caravan mostly on back roads and rarely travelling far.

Another believed that while stock thefts in his area were only small in numbers, nine to seventeen at a time, they were mostly organised. Stolen stock were trucked to neighbouring districts for sale and often boxed in with lots of other legitimate cattle. One officer believed: *Some agents, who are less than honest, are involved in some shady deals at local sales.* Also there is a problem with buyers travelling together and colluding on a sale. Although laws are in place to prevent collusion, such crimes are extremely difficult to prove.

An officer in a coastal region believed that recent break and enters of farm residences and the theft of large farm machinery is also conducted by organised professionals. Success would be dependent on thorough research of the area. A common ploy was for thieves to stop at a farm to ask directions while an accomplice checked over the area. A theft would occur a few days later. Another agreed stating that rural crime has to be organised, thieves need transport, they need to be more careful, they need local knowledge and they have to have contacts as well as a ready market.

Some noted the recent trend in lower socio-economic groups moving to rural communities to take advantage of cheaper rent and a lower cost of living. Sometimes there is a criminal element amongst this group, which provides support for organised crime. Many of these people are unemployed and with few job opportunities in rural areas, are likely to remain so. In remote regions there is no requirement for welfare recipients to regularly report to the Department of Social Security where there is no office located within 50km.

Two others described crime in their area as opportunist crime. Two reported spates of break and enter crimes, which sometimes corresponded to the presence of casual workers in their region. One noted crime increases at the time of the local agricultural show. An officer in an outback region reported that some properties in the area have 10,000 acre paddocks bordered by 5 km of highway and are particularly vulnerable to opportunity crime.

Five officers (25%) reported that locals conducted most crime in their region. Three officers reported on the recent apprehension of some local people responsible for several incidents on farms in the district. One officer watches the release of prisoners back to the area, which often coincides with an increase in property crime. An officer in a coastal area reported that drug abuse was a problem in his region and most local crimes were drug or alcohol-related. These included break and enter crimes and thefts on local farms.

Another officer noted that the incidences of stock theft in his region mostly involved local people. Often the incidences were between neighbours. He maintained that while sometimes the neighbours are at fault, often stock are merely mismustered and neighbours are blamed. This causes a rift in the district. He added: *Such crimes are extremely difficult to solve. How do you prove*

*ownership?* He observed a big difference in areas where there is cooperation between neighbours and other areas where straying stock are never returned.

## 9.4 FARM MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND FARM CRIME

Officers' views were sought on the problems within the rural industries and farming practices that facilitate crime. The following summarises the main issues.

### 9.4.1 Farm management practices

**Identification:** Participants overwhelmingly identified the failure of farmers to have identification on all livestock, farm produce, farm machinery, equipment and tools as the greatest barrier for controlling and preventing farm crime. One officer added:

*It's hard enough for police to catch a car thief when a car has just been stolen and you have all the details. It is almost impossible to investigate a theft when farmers report that a beast went missing months ago, it has no identification and they can't describe it all that well, and there are thousands of others like it in the district.*

One officer, who has a property himself, did admit that only some of his cattle have identification and therefore appreciated the difficulty of always being efficient in this task. However, he added that farmers must attend to these matters. Officers emphasised the necessity of identification on stolen equipment, livestock and other produce for providing proof of ownership in a court of law. Farmers must be able to provide proof of ownership, proof of property, and proof of goods being taken or carried away without consent of the owner.

Two officers noted the difficulty in investigations with the lack of identification on wool. One officer stated that he has never successfully convicted anyone in six years because he has been unable to prove a crime due to lack of identification. He cited a recent case where stolen cattle were found 50 km from home, on a property whose owner also had a paddock next to the one the stock were stolen from. He was unable to prove theft because the cattle still wore the ear tags of their original owner. The victim had failed to renew them. Two officers noted there is nothing in place to force people to identify stock and equipment. One officer maintained that farmers on smaller farms or hobby farms were the worse culprits.

**Record keeping:** An added failure in farm management was the lack of record keeping of stock numbers and stock movements as well as an inventory of all farm machinery and tools with serial numbers. In any investigation, police need to know exactly what is missing. One officer

maintained that ideally farm records should be stored on a computer. Farmers may need to spend a day entering data but it would be worthwhile.

**Farm security:** One officer commented:

*Farmers leave stuff lying around. It's the nature of the industry. It's an easy opportunity for thieves and potential thieves, to steal a pump sitting on the side of a dam near a road.*

He acknowledged there was little farmers can do about this. However he maintained: *They could put good quality locks on things.*

Another practice he has observed is that farmers may pull a tractor apart and leave tools and parts lying around while waiting for a new part. When they return, they find tools and parts missing. Although time consuming, farmers need to take the tractor back to the shed, lock things up and put them away. He added: *Farmers have to help themselves.* Another observed that farm security is not part of the culture saying: *It is a shame that you have to lock behind you to go up the paddock.*

Several officers also observed that farmers are nonchalant about security. One believed farmers are maintaining the same security practices they did twenty years ago. Another stated:

*Farmers don't lock up sheds or a race, nor have yards away from the road.*

Another agreed:

*They don't lock up, they leave keys in their tractors. Fences are not in good order, and they don't check fences or stock regularly.*

Another added that producers have to realise that times have changed and be more security conscious. One believed there was a need to raise awareness within the rural community of what is happening. Two others noted that farmers needed to look out for one another, to know their neighbour's stock, and to keep an eye out for stolen stock being sold at sales. They also need to watch out for strangers in the area and be alert to suspicious activities.

Another disagreed stating that most farmers in his region were good managers. The majority kept good records and their stock counts were within ten. Only a few farmers have poor management practices and let their properties run down.

**Straying stock:** One officer in a region with several national parks, reported a problem of straying stock where leased country and freehold

properties border on national parks. The Forestry Department is not as concerned with fencing and stock follow feed into a million-acre paddock. He believed farmers should take responsibility but they tend to report losses as theft, which cannot be disproved. Another problem identified by one officer was the disputes between neighbours over straying stock.

*Often farmers don't have the finances to fix fences and they want police to sort out disputes.*

He added:

*It's dangerous to have a neighbour that hates you in times of bushfires.*

One officer in an outback area reported on the increase in problems with the arrival in the community of some people who desire to escape from city to remote regions. He continued:

*Often these are not the most honest people and are used to the anonymity of the city. In rural communities, everyone knows what is going on. I have had to deal with assaults between people over matters of suspected theft.*

**Associated industries:** One officer noted the lack of record keeping at saleyards. He has been unable to obtain documents for cases he had been trying to process and has found vehicle records, namely the Transported Stock Statements (TSS), to be inadequate. He suggested it would be of great value for tracing stock if each saleyard recorded details of sales with records of tail and ear tags. While agents maintain their own records, there are different levels of record keeping.

Another officer added that agents could greatly assist police in monitoring sales:

*Agents have knowledge of the clients in the district, know their history, and know their stock. If a client presents a strange mob of cattle at a sale, it wouldn't take much to check where they came from.*

He called for more regulations within saleyard operations. Sometimes stolen stock are transported out of a district for sale through dishonest agents. Such crimes are hard to detect. Another added that it is not in the agent's interest to be implicated in stock theft if they are honest. He believed that for every one in eight cases, an agent is involved.

Problems with identification also carried over into the associated industries, such as abattoirs and tanneries. Abattoirs do not check papers and permits or ear tags. It is almost impossible for police to try to follow stock through abattoirs when the policy is to only leave one in every ten beasts with an ear tag. Thus when police try to check for stolen stock

there is no identification. One officer gave an example of a stud bull that was stolen with the hide eventually discovered at the tanners. The brand had been cut off and the tanners kept no records of who sold the animal or where it came from.

Officers acknowledged that methods of stock identification do not entirely prevent thieves from taking stock. Ear tags and tail tags can be removed. Earmarks and brands can be altered. Ears can be cut off. Several officers maintained that the only secure identification is micro chipping especially using a rumen bolus.

**The non-reporting of crime:** The non-reporting of crime on farms was highlighted as a problem within the survey of farmers and in interviews with victims of crime. Several officers believed the failure of farmers to report crimes was one of the biggest obstacles to overcome. Several participants emphasised how important it was for farmers to report all incidences of crime so that police can identify patterns or trends in the area. If a suspect is named, police can monitor his/her movements. One pointed out that if reports increase, the statistics increase and it is more likely that more funding would be allocated to deal with agricultural crime.

Some officers believed the reluctance to report crimes was a part of the culture of conservative rural communities. Another noted there is an inherent tolerance of stock theft in rural culture. Thefts can be attributed to straying animals through to generations of stock thieves within one family in a community. Rural people tend to keep to themselves and are not inclined to report crimes. Another agreed saying that farmers often know who an offender is but are reluctant to point blame at someone in their community.

Several officers believed one of the main problems is that farmers do not report thefts in a reasonable period of time. One reported that he has received reports of a theft up to six months after the event. Two others pointed out that this is due to the nature of the industry. Owners of large properties may only muster every six to twelve months making any suspicions of stock theft difficult. One added:

*Six months can pass and some farmers may be too embarrassed to come in and report a theft.*

Another added:

*They also don't let police know if they find them again.*

One officer reported that farmers tend to write off stock losses to disease, straying stock, or dogs. It can be up to a year before they realise that there has been a theft. One added that where a farmer waits until there is a third suspected theft, it is often too late for police to conduct a successful

investigation. However, the officers agreed that regardless of the time that has passed, police still need to know what is happening in a district.

Another officer also noted delays in reporting where there are break and enter crimes on hobby farms. The owners can be away for a month and then they may not miss something for another two weeks.

Others maintained that farmers believe reporting crime is a waste of time because the police cannot, or will not do anything about an investigation. Another observed that police inactivity does not encourage further reporting. One thought: *Farmers believe they won't get the stolen property back, so they don't bother reporting.* Another added:

*Farmers often think it's hopeless and that nothing can be done which is not always the case. If police know where there are problems and can identify patterns in crime, they can be more proactive and direct patrols and investigations.*

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

Others maintained that sometimes farmers do not report a theft if the amount stolen is too small to be bothered with. As one said:

*Farmers come up to me in the street. One reported the loss of prized show chickens. He felt silly about making a proper report but the chickens were of value and he was upset.*

Another added:

*Farmers think police are busy and they don't want to hassle them. They don't expect police to drive 250 km to check a report.*

Another noted that some farmers do not want to look silly if their stock should just happen to be lost. One officer maintained that some farmers have poor record keeping skills and are unsure of how much stock, produce or equipment are missing and therefore do not report thefts.

Others maintained it was the difficulty of finding proof of a crime that prevented farmers from going to the police. One stated that often a victim knows who the offender is but cannot prove it. He believed there was a need to encourage farmers to report crimes anonymously. One officer pointed out that some farmers do not know **how** to report a crime. Table 9.1 displays the range of perceptions of police on the reasons why farmers do not report crimes.

**Table 9.1:**  
**Perceptions of police on the reasons why farms do not report crimes.**

<u>Reason</u>	(%)
Too much time passes before the loss or damage is discovered	73
Farmers think it is a waste of time reporting crime because there is little that can be done about solving these crimes	55
Even if they have their suspicions, it is hard for farmers to find the proof	45
The losses are too small to bother about	23
Living in a small community, reporting a suspect in the district would be more trouble than it was worth	23
It is not part of the rural culture	18
Some are too embarrassed - shows poor management	14
Farmers would rather deal with the problem themselves	9

#### 9.4.2 Solutions to the problem

We asked officers what suggestions they had to improve practices within the industry to combat farm crime. The following summarises the ideas they put forward.

**National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS):** Several officers believed the only solution to the policing of stock theft was the implementation of the National Livestock Identification Scheme. Stock implanted with a microchip in the ear or with a rumen bolus provides unalterable permanent identification. Scanners located at all sale outlets will provide immediate identification of ownership and enable trace back of stolen stock.

One officer was sceptical about the implementation of NLIS because these changes will cost money. Another observed that farmers are a conservative group and it will be difficult to implement changes in management practices. He acknowledged the costs involved for producers but maintained the more valuable the animals, the more cost effective it will be.

Two officers believed there was a need for legislation to make NLIS obligatory. Full participation by graziers and all sale outlets is necessary to ensure the system will work. One who was a keen advocate of the introduction of NLIS, described how he saw the system working:

*Graziers would ensure all calves born on their property would have a rumen bolus. They would then record a description of the animal along with rumen bolus number. This information would then be sent to the Rural Lands Protection Board and stored on a mainframe computer. The information would then be available at all saleyards. Stock would be scanned as they enter a saleyard and the responsibility would fall on the auctioneer to ensure all stock in a lot belonged to the same producer. If at anytime a theft is discovered, the victim can go to the RLPB where all the records are available to provide a trail for a police investigation.*

He added that private sales between producers would also require lodgement of the details with the RLPB. He also believed there was a need to legislate to stop the accidental sale of a neighbours stock. It would be the responsibility of the seller to ensure that every beast sold is his or her property. Producers will need a scanning wand to identify their own stock.

In response to the question about costs to producers, he maintained that the cost was very good insurance and the expense could be a tax deduction. He added that graziers could pay \$3.00 for ear tags, which only last a few months. A rumen bolus lasts the lifetime of the animal. He has found farmers in his area agree with the concept. Transported Stock Statements are frustrating for farmers. With NLIS, branding will be obsolete. Producers will receive higher prices for unmarked hides, and there will also be less time spent handling stock. He added: *Farmers don't like change and they will whinge, but they will get over it - the problem of tracing stolen stock will be over.*

**Identification:** One officer suggested that farmers sit down for a day and put a paint spot for example, an iridescent green, on all tools, equipment and machinery. This information can be put on COPS in the event of a theft. If the tools are found in the same town, police can quickly identify them. Sometimes the first thing a thief will do is scratch off an identification mark. There is a need to link the paint spot with the owner or victim. Therefore, it would be necessary to have a second mark as well as a paint spot, such as a second identification number in a hidden location. This can be a drivers licence number, or better still, the property's stock brand. Thieves may overlook such a mark. In the case of theft, the victim could go to the RLPB and get a copy of the brand certificate.

One officer suggested that for stock identification, farmers tattoo inside the ear of stock or some other secluded area that they would only know but could later identify.

**Photographs:** For ease of identification, farmers should also take photographs of all equipment and store them with records of serial numbers. One farmer used a digital camera to take a photo of lost sheep found on his property. He was then able to e-mail police a copy of the photograph with other information.

**National Brokers Index:** There needs to be a state or national register of stock sales. With the volume of stock shipped interstate, there is a need to have such a database to track stock sales and movements. As many saleyards have their own records, it may be relatively easy to establish such a system.

**Saleyard watch:** Saleyards could police themselves more. Too often stolen stock is sold. Agents should be on guard to prevent this from occurring.

**Locks:** Farmers need to put good quality padlocks on gates, fuel tanks, pumps and other equipment. One officer noted that too often, farmers put a \$2 lock on a \$1000 fuel tank. Thieves have less success picking or cutting with a bolt cutter, a lock of good quality. A good lock may be worth \$80 but it will last for years. He added: *Security costs money but it's worth it.*

**Security lights:** One officer advises farmers to put a floodlight, operating on sensors, at each end of the farmhouse. He added: *Thieves hate light.*

**Security cameras:** Cameras may stop those thieves who come to a house and knock and then pretend that they are looking for someone if someone answers. If no one is around, they then take what they want. One officer warned that it is important not to use cheap videotape in a camera or replay it several times over. Too often when a theft occurs, all that is available on a security camera tape is snow.

## 9.5 POLICING AGRICULTURAL CRIME

### 9.5.1 Obstacles

Given the recognised problems within the agricultural industry that hinder crime prevention in rural areas, we also asked officers what specific obstacles they faced in policing agricultural crimes.

**Time and resources:** The most common obstacles reported by officers were the lack of time and resources to adequately deal with agricultural crime. Others (39%) noted the area they had to cover was so large and

diverse it was difficult to police it all effectively. As one said: *With so many back roads and a restriction of one or two days a fortnight allocated to rural crime, there is not enough time to do the job.*

Some officers (26%) added there was a need for more manpower to cover the huge distances officers have to police. One cited a recent case where it took two officers five hours to attend and investigate a crime scene on a property. This task effectively took two officers and a vehicle away from a busy station for that period of time. Another agreed saying:

*Police resources only stretch so far. When you compare the volume of crime in urban and rural areas, you can't really send police out to a property when they are needed in town. We actually have to bring in officers from one-officer stations in the outlying regions to cope with the workload in town. People complain but when we have 165 car thefts, but what do you do? It's not cost effective policing.*

These participants emphasised the need for a designated rural crime officer.

Another officer added that staffing shortages also creates difficulties in one or two-officer stations. There is a need to patrol back roads but while out on the road, officers cannot be at the station. Therefore, calls to police are deferred to a regional centre. One added that there were not enough twenty-four hour stations in rural New South Wales. New laws about deaths in custody also means an officer can be off the streets for up to five hours when detaining a person.

Other officers noted the time required to be proactive in crime prevention in rural areas. It takes time to patrol roads, to stop trucks and check them over, as well as the paper work, attend sales and abattoirs, talk to people and get feedback.

Two officers noted the difficulties of handling and holding suspected stolen stock. Officers complained that they should not have to borrow equipment, horses, dogs or contract stockmen to muster stolen stock. Officers in a western region had to use their own horses and vehicles to muster stolen stock with no reimbursement from the Service. Some envied the resources available to the Queensland Stock Squad who have all the equipment they need, horses, swags, and vehicles.

Another officer believed there was not enough acknowledgment of agricultural crime, particularly the costs to farmers. A recent report of stock missing valued at \$70,000 was significant and he believed a theft of that amount in a city would receive far more attention.

**Policing Transported Stock Statements:** Several officers (30%) were very sceptical about the value of the current Transported Stock Statements as a control measure in stock theft. One believed there is

no way that police can track stolen stock by this method. There are no serial numbers on the forms. In addition, the forms are available to anyone on the Internet. Thieves can have their own TSS form and fill it out themselves. If police stopped the truck to check the load and the TSS, it is unlikely that any irregularities would be detected. He recommended a return to the previous system of permit books. The amount of information could be reduced but at least the system would provide a means of tracing stock.

As one pointed out, policing the use of TSS requires officers to get up on transports and check stock. This does not happen regularly. He added that many police have little knowledge of stock. Frequently, the descriptions of stock on the TSS are vague which makes it difficult for police checking animals. Producers who are punters with stock sales create the greatest difficulty for police. In one truckload, there can be a hotchpotch of different ear tags and marks, or brands, and different breeds of stock. Often brands are impossible to read due to age, or due to the fact that cattle sweat.

Some officers believed the recent idea of combining the TSS and the Vendor Declaration forms into one form would be an improvement. Many officers advocated for the introduction of the National Livestock Identification Scheme as the only solution to tracing stolen stock.

**Lack of community support:** Several officers noted the frustration of being unable to get local people to pass them information about suspicious activities or people within the district. Farmers will mention suspicious activities to stock and station agents but will not report to police. Farmers know the local area, know the people, and are alert to suspicious characters. Police need to know that information.

One officer noted that often country people prefer not to get involved, particularly in small communities where everyone knows everyone else. Even if farmers do provide some information, they may not wish to make an official statement by not wanting to be involved. Another added:

*Farmers tell you they know their neighbours have lost stock but they haven't reported it. Often they will tell you a month later in the pub or at the football.*

One stated:

*Farmers might tell you who the cattle duffers are but when you ask, "How do you know?" there is dead silence. Local gossip is usually correct but police have to have proof.*

Another noted that:

*People talk in pubs but dobbing in is a bad thing in Australian culture. There is a need to change this thinking.*

**False reporting:** Some officers reported that they were suspicious of some farmers falsifying reports of thefts on their property for the purpose of tax evasion. Farmers may experience a theft but are exaggerating the numbers of stock they report stolen. One officer maintained that in 40% of reports, farmers are not telling the truth. Such suspicions have been confirmed when he has examined the property and found that there is no likelihood that the country would support stock of the numbers reported missing. Others agreed that reports of theft appear to increase around June. One added:

*Farmers can't write off too many stock to dingo kills, it looks suspicious. It's easier to report stock stolen.*

An officer in a remote region, told of a reported theft of 1000 sheep. The sheep had been grazing along a public road where there had been several deaths due to road kills and flooding in the area. When the owner realised that he could get compensation for flood losses, he told police he was considering withdrawing the report.

So we asked these officers how they established whether a report was genuine or not. All responded that police should treat all reports as genuine. Most agreed that every report necessitated a visit to the property to assess the situation. There may be a pattern of events evident within the district.

Officers stated there was a need to look at a farmer's management practices and records to authenticate a report. One officer, who also has a family grazing property, believed many suspected thefts are losses due to natural causes. He reported that he had lost five cattle last winter and believes that if he did not check his stock regularly, he would not have found the carcasses and may have suspected theft. One officer said:

*I have a policy of attributing 10% of stock losses to natural causes before suspecting theft. The standard of the property's dams, and fences and farm management records are then assessed, which usually takes half a day. I have found that if a property is run down, it is often the case that stock have died. If records are up to date and fences are in good repair, the report of theft is probably correct.*

Several officers noted that on properties where there is an absentee landlord or share-farming arrangements with a manager, and there are repeated reports of stock theft, there could be many grey areas in an investigation. Sometimes farm managers are involved in the theft or they may report thefts to cover up mismanagement. One officer stated:

*If managers are given latitude to run the place, it is difficult to control theft by their hand. Records can be easily manipulated. After several years, an absentee landlord would have no idea of what is what. Even if a manager is honest, if he is not keeping good records, it's very easy to have problems. Absentee landlords are often out of touch with what is happening on the property and may suspect a theft to account for losses that can be attributed to natural causes.*

He referred to a recent report by an absentee landlord who had fallen out with his manager and then accused him of many things missing. Yet, the owner had no understanding of what was involved in running the property, for example, how much feed was required.

One officer in a remote region maintained that many reports could be attributed to poor farm management. He believes one in three farmers in his district are not farm orientated, being people from the city seeking a quick money-making opportunity. He explained:

*They will arrange to buy place and put a 1000 head of sheep on it and expect 2000 head next year. It doesn't happen. This is a harsh environment. You need good farm management skills to cope with flood, drought and disease.*

He noted two recent reports of stock theft to police actually resulted in the farmers being prosecuted for cruelty to animals.

**Legal obstacles:** Several participants maintained that laws should be changed to provide more police powers. Only Rural Lands Protection Board officers have the power to stop sales when suspecting stolen stock. They also have the power to go onto a property to search regarding a suspected theft. Police do not have such powers. In addition, police face great difficulties in securing warrants to search a property.

Another noted the inconsistencies in legislation and record keeping between states, which make it difficult for police to pursue stock thefts. Records are kept of stock movements across the New South Wales and Queensland borders while South Australia and Victoria have open borders.

Again officers cited the lack of identification on property and poor record keeping by farmers with the subsequent inability to prove ownership of stolen property in court as the main reason why there are so few convictions. Another maintained that a stock brief is one of the hardest police have to compile because guilt has to be established. Offenders easily escape conviction by pleading ignorance of the theft. One long serving officer reported he had never seen a jail term handed down in his career and there had been only four charges laid in eight years. When a case gets to court, it is impossible to prove beyond reasonable doubt.

Some officers believed that some magistrates, who come from the city, have little understanding of agricultural crimes and the culture within rural communities. One noted the difficulty of convincing a magistrate that one Hereford is different from another.

Another agreed:

*I have heard farmers say in court, I know my own children in a crowd. However, magistrates won't accept that farmers know their own cattle. They have to prove it.*

One believed that only 2% of cases get to court and although livestock theft carries fourteen years' imprisonment, usually criminals get off with a bond. Some magistrates use associated laws, such as "the unlawful use of another's cattle", which carries a lesser penalty. Magistrates can also look at other penalties given out in area to use as a precedent.

To explore these issues further, data on the convictions and sentencing for livestock theft were obtained through the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. Tables 9.2 and 9.3 display the recorded sentences for livestock theft under Section 126 of the NSW Crimes Act recorded in the New South Wales Local Courts for 1998 and 1999. The maximum sentence for livestock theft is fourteen years' imprisonment. Note the recording system differed between the years.

The tables reveal that for 1998 there were only seven offences proven with no convictions recorded. One other case was dismissed. In 1999, there were again seven offences proven with three fines and one order of compensation.

---

**Table 9.2:  
Recorded sentences for livestock theft, Section 126 of the *Crimes Act 1998*.**

Offence	Dismissed after hearing	No conviction	Offence Proven	Total
424 Cattle kill with intent to steal <\$2001		1		1
423 Cattle kill with intent to steal <\$5001		3		3
422 Cattle theft <\$15,001	1	2		3
430 Unlawfully alter brand of another's cattle <\$15,001		1		1

**Table 9.3:**  
**Recorded sentences for livestock theft, Section 126 of the Crimes Act; 1999.**

Offence	Recognition without supervision	Fine	Compensation	Total
425 Cattle theft <\$2001		1		1
426 Cattle theft <\$5001		1		1
422 Cattle theft <\$15,001	2	1	1	4
430 Unlawfully alter brand of another's cattle <\$15,001		1		1

We further investigated this issue through interviews with local court magistrates. One has worked as a country magistrate for sixteen years, and has heard more than thirty cases of livestock theft in his time. He recalled:

*The overwhelming majority of those accused have pleaded not guilty and most have been acquitted. The cases are invariably circumstantial with the animals being found on the defendant's property but with no evidence as to how they got there and no admission of wrongdoing. These cases are notoriously difficult to prove, particularly when the alleged thief is a neighbour and the country is of a rugged type.*

He advised that magistrates in a summary court can only award a maximum of two years jail term plus one year for culminating issues. Only District Courts can give higher penalties. In his experience, only one in ten cases achieve a conviction. Cases come down to two issues; who owns the stock and how the stock got onto the defendant's property. Cases are easier to prove if stock have travelled some distance but commonly, the dispute is between neighbours. The main reason that penalties are so light is that usually there are only a few stock that can be proven to be stolen. While a theft may involve 3000 sheep, the majority may have been sold leaving only 30 that can be used to convict the thief.

He agreed that most judges do not have a rural background and it would help if they did. However, he argued that judges do not have a background in a lot of subjects in the many and diverse cases they must deliberate over. Therefore, the onus is on police to present evidence in an understandable form. He argued for the need for a specialist stock squad who would have the knowledge to gather sufficient evidence to convince a court of theft. He added:

*I think it's almost impossible to stop criminals from stealing stock. The rewards are high and a grazier can be ruined overnight. However, the best way to minimise stock theft is to have a reliable system of stock identification, to give police more powers, and to place significant obligations upon stock agents to ensure the status of the stock, which pass through their hands. Micro chipping of stock would allow positive and quick identification at all times, random inspection of stock transports by someone with a microchip scanner would make theft a riskier business, and nationwide laws about stock agents scanning stock and checking a stolen stock list before sales would minimise the criminal's prospects of making a quick dollar.*

*For this proposal to work, there would need to be an Australia wide approach to the problem so that the microchip details of stolen stock in one state would be on a 'stolen stock register' that was available in all states and territories.*

The magistrate was pleased to forward a copy of the written judgement from a trial that he presided over which he believed typified the difficulties of prosecuting such crimes. The following is a summary of the findings.

### **Neighbour vs. Neighbour**

**The defendant was charged with a number of offences relating to the unlawful use of ninety-two sheep and seven head of cattle and five merino fleeces owned by his neighbours between 1987 and 1991. The stock were found to be on his property where he ran 1200 sheep and 300 cattle. The defendant pleaded not guilty to all charges.**

**The defendant did not dispute that the animals belonged to his neighbours but argued that the fences in the district were not stock proof and there was a history of stock wandering between properties. The properties are large in country that is scrubby, rocky and heavily timbered. Evidence was given that stock are difficult to muster in this terrain and clean musters were almost impossible to effect. While accepting that the stock came onto his property, he claimed he did not knowingly use them in any way or intend to deprive the owners of their stock.**

**A number of the sheep were found to be shorn and branded with the defendant's blue paint brand over the existing brand. The defendant argued he used contractors to attend to shearing, branding and marking. Large mobs of sheep were mustered and it would have been very likely that stock that had come onto his property would have been included without the contractors realising.**

### **Neighbour vs. Neighbour (continued)**

**While the case was circumstantial, all indicators pointed to the defendant's guilt. The evidence showed that the defendant appropriated livestock that had come onto his place. Yet there was no evidence, which directly pointed to the guilt of the defendant. No one witnessed him taking the stock. It was significant that on a number of occasions before his arrest, the defendant contacted neighbours and told them that he had found their animals on his property. In one instance, some 600 sheep were returned. The magistrate concluded that these actions did not indicate a criminal state of mind. The defendant had no previous convictions; he was a single man in his early forties who had worked most of his life on the land. His agent and employee described him as an honest person who was not particularly skilled as a farmer or as a stockman. In the absence of direct evidence, the magistrate was not satisfied beyond reasonable doubt as to the guilt of the defendant and accordingly the charges were dismissed.**

#### **9.5.2 Suggestions for more organisational support**

We asked police what organisational support would be of assistance in fighting rural crime. Officer's responses included the following:

- **More time and resources.** The majority of officers interviewed called for more time and resources to fight agricultural crime.
- **More staff.** Eight participants called for more staff in rural areas. One believed that freeing up administration staff for general duties could alleviate the staff shortages in country areas.
- **More vehicles.** Some LACs cover large areas, and officers find there are never enough vehicles when police need to attend crime scenes on properties.
- **A designated stock squad.** A large majority of those we spoke to (61%) called for a permanent stock squad. These officers did not believe officers who were responsible for rural crime in addition to other duties, could effectively police rural crime. Stock squad officers need to have the time to be constantly out in the community to learn what is going on, follow the movement of stock, attend sales, consult with agents, visit farmers, collate local knowledge, know local brands, ear tags and marks, and be someone the community knows has the knowledge to encourage farmers to report crimes. A stock squad officer could have a complete office in a four-wheel-drive vehicle, with all the necessary equipment, such as mobile data terminals to enter all data at a crime site. Many were envious of the very well-equipped Queensland Stock Squad.

- ***Support from management.*** It became evident in discussions, that officers responsible for rural crime valued the support of their local commander. Officers, who received support and encouragement from their superiors to undertake crime prevention strategies in their area, remarked on their appreciation of that support. Officers in other LACs where rural crime was not seen as a priority by commanders, reported they were frustrated by the lack of time and resources allocated to them to effectively pursue rural crime investigations or be proactive in crime prevention initiatives.
- ***New legislation.*** The Police Service needs to have their own Acts rather than acting under the *Rural Lands Protection Board Act*. Police need more powers to effectively act against rural crime. For example, police do not have the power to go onto a property or stop a sale, as do the RLPB officers. Neither do police have the power to act at wool brokers or abattoirs. Most of the other Acts police use, such as the *Dividing Fence Act*, the *Stock Movement Act*, or the *Wool Hide And Skins Act* are outdated and need revising.
- ***A specialised rural database.*** One officer called for an information database to record information on rural crime matters, such as the suspicious activities relating to the movement of stock. Although this information is entered into COPS, there was a need for that information to be segregated into a centralised database. This implies that more resources are needed for *Operation Nicaragua* to operationalise such a database.
- ***National legislation for stock identification.*** As stock are transported across state borders, there is a need for uniform national legislation to overcome the inconsistencies between the states in legislation on stock identification and movements.
- ***DNA testing.*** DNA testing for identifying stolen stock and the microfibre on stolen wool is a positive action police can take in an investigation. These techniques need to be widely available.
- ***More networking.*** One officer suggested there should be a policy of networking between the Police Service and other organisations within rural communities, such as the RLPB, stock and station agents, RSPCA officers etc. Another called for more training days utilising the skills of those within these organisations.
- ***Satellite technology.*** One officer believed stock theft investigations would be greatly assisted by the availability of satellite information through the Environment Protection Authority. Such technology is invaluable for drug operations in the city and is much cheaper than using a helicopter for searches. Satellite technology could be used to search for mobs of cattle or transports.

- **Rural-based crime agencies.** One officer suggested that country Commands would be better resourced if crime agencies were located in major regional centres. Agencies such as technical surveillance rarely leave Sydney to attend major investigations in the country.

## 9.6 CRIME PREVENTION INITIATIVES

We asked police about the kind of innovative strategies or activities they employed to target farm crime in their district. Although many officers regretted not having the time or resources to conduct more proactive operations in their region, many excellent strategies were described.

### 9.6.1 Crime prevention strategies

**Use of the media:** Four officers utilised local media to raise awareness of crime. One had advertised the occurrence of recent stock thefts to alert other producers.

**Networking:** Several officers networked with local agencies such as the RLPB officers, stock and station agents, Department of Agriculture officers, saleyard managers, stock carriers and local veterinarians, who were viewed as excellent contacts and good sources of information. As one noted: *These agents usually notice when things aren't right.* Some LACs have held rural crime training days for staff utilising the expertise of these people. One officer reported that being new to the area, she valued the advice provided by the RLPB officer who showed her places in the district where thieves could hide stock, and the areas that were vulnerable to crime.

**Mixing in the community:** Officers reported that they attend field days, community meetings, and visit local farmers. One officer maintained that he has gathered more information sitting down over a cup of tea with farmers than any other way. He also holds meetings with farmers to explain why it is important to report crimes and why it is important to maintain records on stock etc. Another agreed stating:

*Farmers are great sources of information, which should be used. People come up to me to report things and pass information. People check me out. Farmers will say someone referred them to me.*

Another officer added that he makes repeat visits to victims of farm crime to report on the progress of the investigation and also to get further information and check with neighbours. One officer visits problem areas calling in on the local pub, the store, and visiting local farmers. In another area, the community liaison officer attends the agricultural shows and field

days to establish contact with local people. He has great people skills and has developed a rapport with the community. He is also the youth worker and goes into schools to speak with the next generation of farmers to raise awareness about farm crime and to encourage the reporting of crime.

One calls by shearing sheds because shearers usually know who is stealing sheep in an area. Such visits can deter potential offenders. Another has held seminars in areas where there are one-officer stations. Farmers are invited in to talk about security on-farm and what to look for when they suspect a crime.

**Police operations:** An officer in an area transversed by a major highway conducted an operation over harvest. He checked travelling harvest equipment looking for stolen equipment or chemicals and pesticides.

Some officers have conducted rural patrols on back roads. One works in partnership with other police in neighbouring communities patrolling back roads and making personal visits to farmers.

This officer was also part of an operation on the Queensland border checking all border crossings. Although trucks diverted their route after a while, the operation was still effective. This operation was conducted in liaison with stock officers from 'Operation Nicaragua'. The officer maintained that working with specialised police was an invaluable educational experience.

He also makes a point of taking photographs of transports or other equipment that he has concerns about. This information is to assist him in any future investigation.

**Surveys and letter drops:** Two officers had conducted a letter drop to farmers about crime prevention. One included information on the PAL hotline. He also included a small questionnaire seeking details of the property for a local database. Information gathered included the location of the property, identification of the property on the road, a mud map of the property, UHF frequency, details of machinery and stock on-farm etc.

The other officer approached a local agricultural produce company and asked them to send out information on farm crime with the monthly accounts. This practice saves on resources and gets the message out to farmers.

Another officer also has a register of farms in his district, with information such as who is supposed to be on the farm, who to contact in an emergency and various other demographic information.

**Useful information:** One officer had collected a series of things to aid him in his investigations. These included:

- Tail tag numbers used in the district and the owners names.
- Earmarks used in the district imprinted on a leather pallet.
- Copies of local cattle brands.
- The fire district grid map of all properties and back roads.
- Details of saleyard operations.
- Copies of the code of practice at saleyards.
- Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) report.
- *The Rural Lands Protection Board Act.*
- A map of where truck-monitoring cameras are located on highways.

This officer has used the film from the truck monitoring cameras to investigate the theft of a top bloodline of stock. These cameras only keep films for 24 hours but a paper readout of numbers is then available. His investigation involved checking 127 numbers, which was arduous but worthwhile.

### 9.6.2 Proactive activities

We further asked whether officers had time to regularly attend stock sales or clearing sales, and check stock transports. Five participants reported that they never participated in such activities, as rural crime was not viewed as a priority in their area. However, six others noted the value of interaction with the community through visits to saleyards. One officer prefers to attend stock sales in uniform for a deterrent effect. Another ensures he visits saleyards in plain clothes to encourage people to talk to him. However he wears his uniform when visiting an abattoir. He added: *Sometimes it's important to be seen in uniform.*

One reported he attend sales with the local RLPB officer. Another officer believed that most stolen stock does not go through stock sales. However attending sales was beneficial for gathering information. People will approach officers at a sale. Officers can also talk to stock and station agents, carriers and other industry personnel. One officer believes the police need to be seen doing something to fight rural crime. He regularly faxes abattoirs with information on stolen stock.

Five officers reported that they try to conduct these checks but are stretched for time. One added that not having enough time means police actions are reactive not proactive.

Some officers noted the difficulty in understanding the information on TSS forms. One maintained that the majority of stock being transported is legitimate and did not think checking TSS will identify stolen stock. One noted the difficulty of checking transports at night. Usually thieves use the cover of darkness. He is usually suspicious of small cattle trucks travelling at night.

One officer was concerned that he has a good rapport with the local people and did not want to jeopardise that relationship by enforcing the TSS. He stated:

*One old farmer said it would take him an hour to fill out form with tail, ear tags, and brands and a description of the stock for one truckload. Farmers are different people but if police stay on the right side of them, they can be a wealth of knowledge.*

### **9.6.3 Involvement in *Neighbourhood Watch* or *Rural Watch***

Officers were asked whether they were involved in any farmer or community organisations, such as *Neighbourhood Watch* or *Rural Watch*, to raise awareness about farm crime amongst farmers in their district. Three officers reported they were involved in establishing *Rural Watch* groups. Officers noted the value for police who run such groups in a community. These groups can be a great source of information. It is also beneficial for people to get together to discuss issues. Another agreed on the value of such organisations but suggested that it is not necessary for groups to be police driven. There would be value in RLPB officers coordinating such groups, as they would have more input and stock management advice.

Four officers reported on the success of *Rural Watch* in small communities within their Command. They believed the ingredient for success was the interest and enthusiasm of the members and the social value of the group. Two officers added it was necessary for people and properties to be relatively close together. In outback regions the distance was too great between properties for any chance of organised rural watch to operate. Three officers were aware of rural watch operating on an informal basis within their communities.

Nine participants believed that organised groups were very difficult to establish and maintain in rural communities. Two others noted that farmers are busy and involved in many community groups and do not like attending meetings. One officer believed it was better for *Rural Watch* to be established as part of an existing group, such as the Rural Fire Brigade or grower organisations. Such organisations are always looking for guest speakers at their meetings and this is an opportunity for police to speak and encourage *Rural Watch* activities. Another added that farmers appreciate police involvement. Again officers noted the time involved for officers to participate in such activities.

Two officers described *Neighbourhood Watch* as ‘dead in the water’ in their area. Groups fail due to lack of funding or lack of cooperation within the community. One commented there was a fine line between *Rural Watch* and nosy busybodies. The authors’ previous studies of crime in rural communities (Jobes *et al.*, 2000) also highlighted the failure of *Neighbourhood Watch* in rural New South Wales on an organised basis for similar reasons. However, many communities boasted the success of *Rural Watch* operating on an informal basis.

#### **9.6.4 Community action**

We also sought officer's impressions on whether people in their district would let their neighbour know or call the police if they noticed some suspicious activity on their neighbour's property. Responses varied between regions. Two reported that people within their region tended to keep to themselves. Two others reported problems within their district with disputes between neighbours. These areas were not conducive to people working together in crime prevention. Another reported that it was difficult to have that kind of neighbourly support in his area, as many local farms are smallholdings that are not lived on. He added: *Hobby farms do not encourage the neighbourly thing.*

Two others in outback regions noted that distance was a factor in preventing farmers from observing suspicious activities on neighbouring properties. However, one noted the frequent use of UHF radio between farmers in his district. Stock thieves use UHF radio between a gyrocopter and their accomplices mustering stock on the ground. Farmers monitor the radio to be alert to such activities. Likewise, police also monitor radio conversations.

Four other respondents remarked on the excellent community spirit amongst farmers in their region and believed they would talk amongst themselves about security in the district. One stated that farmers notice a lot of things and are suspicious of strangers. He added:

*The farmers here don't live in each other's back pocket but they do take note of strange vehicles in the area and sometimes record a registration number.*

#### **9.6.5 Use of police hotlines**

We asked whether officers would encourage local farmers to use the police free call numbers to report suspicious activities in their district or whether they would prefer that farmers report crimes or suspicious activity directly to police. The majority of participants believed there was a place for the Police Assistance Line (PAL) for reporting crimes on farms if they fit the criterion of being of a minor nature. For example, the vandalism of a mailbox would be better reported through PAL. One officer in a remote location believed that when officers are unable to get to a property due to weather conditions, the PAL line is a way of making a timely report to police. He noted the problem of promoting the PAL line in remote areas. There is a need for farmer organisations, such as NSW Farmers, to promote the use of the PAL hotline.

Two officers added that in a small one or two-officer station, an officer might have no time to attend immediately to a crime. Often it is too late to wait until farmer comes into town to report a crime. Two others noted that some country people do not like coming into a police station. Another added that PAL was an option for farmers wanting anonymity in reporting a crime within a small

community especially if they suspect a neighbour. These officers stressed the importance of police follow-up to these reports.

One officer was in favour of using PAL for farmers reporting crimes if they have all the necessary information together. However, he was concerned that people hate waiting on a telephone and will hang up. Therefore, he preferred to encourage farmers to report directly to their local police.

Almost half, (48%) would prefer farmers in their district report directly to them. One officer maintained that he always ensures someone goes out to a property to respond to all reports of crime. In his area, agricultural crime is considered a priority and officers have the time to respond. Others believed in the need for face-to-face contact and the opportunity for country people to provide information for police. Another added it was important for farmers to be able to network with a stock investigator. He added:

*Country people have less faith in outsiders. They need to be comfortable with the local officer before revealing information.*

One more agreed adding:

*Farmers would rather report to police they know. I have farmers often coming into the station seeking advice. They may not want to make waves in the district by accusing a neighbour of theft. Stock stray and if neighbours are accused of theft, it can create deep divisions within the community.*

Two officers were not in favour of the impersonal nature of hot lines. They did not believe they were supportive of victims. One believed officers should have the time to provide a service to victims of crime in the country. Another was concerned that PAL staff would not know enough about rural crimes to record all the correct information. One believed it was necessary for police to be familiar with the local community. He noted the difficulty of encouraging farmers to cooperate with police and report thefts. He has a policy of visiting the site of every break and enter in his district, farms included.

Others maintained that for major crimes like stock theft, it is important that police go to the property, as there is so much evidence at a site. Another noted that officers investigating a crime could use the opportunity to do a security audit on the property and look at strategies for future crime prevention.

One officer was against the use of PAL because he believed that many calls are not attended to. He believed that six different officers can take six different reports of stock theft from an area and the reports will stay on the system until a designated stock officer verifies the reports and initiates action. By then, an investigation may be too late. Consequently, he prefers to take reports himself. He has local farmers come up to him in the street to report thefts from their properties. He added: *Most farmers are honest, hard-working people and they deserve better service.*

## **9.7 STAFF TRAINING IN RURAL CRIME**

We asked officers whether the training within the Police Service had been adequate to equip them to deal with rural crime in their area. The majority responded that to date, training had been minimal. Several added that many officers come from metropolitan areas and have limited knowledge of the agricultural industry. Even those officers with a long and extensive experience in dealing with rural crime desired further training and admitted to gaps in their knowledge of all the industry types in their region. One claimed that rural crime was an extremely broad topic and there was a great deal of new information to absorb with changes in agriculture happening all the time. There are new cattle breeds, new legislation, and many new and varied farming operations, such as farming alpacas, llamas and rabbits. There was little time to keep up with the necessary information.

Most officers we interviewed were pleased with recent initiatives within the service to provide training for staff. There was a general consensus that all officers in rural areas should have at least a basic knowledge of the industries to enable them to competently seek the necessary information when a crime is reported. Several LACs have held training sessions for officers employing the skills of people within their local community such as RLPB officers, stock and station agents, officers from the Departments of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the RSPCA, as well as local farmers. One officer described this type of training as **excellent** and was impressed with the ability of one stock agent to target his presentation to examine the issues from the perspective of police officers. Fieldwork on farms allowed officers to gain experience in handling stock and identify varying breeds. Several officers emphasised the importance of this practical hands-on experience for rural police. Many officers were keen to participate in the new rural crime course to be conducted through the Orange Agricultural College. One officer stressed the need for such courses to include practical hands on training in handling stock and the like. Others regretted that work and time pressures prevented them attending to the training of officers within their command.

Several officers stressed that it was important for officers to apply to be a designated rural crime officer rather than be appointed. This was to ensure that the officer responsible would have a genuine interest in the area. Not every officer would. Several of the officers we spoke to, who were responsible for rural crime in their regions, had a background in agriculture. This ranged from being raised on a farm, having worked as a jackeroo or farmhand, through to holding university qualifications in agriculture. One believed his life experience on the land was all the training he needed.

So we asked officers whether they believed that a farming background was *absolutely necessary* for the knowledge and understanding required to adequately provide a service to rural communities. Most agreed that such life experience would be of benefit, 43% believed it was a necessity. However, 39% emphasised that an *interest* in agricultural crime was the necessary ingredient for successful

policing in this area. Others (30%) disagreed that officers needed a rural background, stating that the necessary knowledge could be learnt on the job. Officers from city could gain the knowledge if they desired to. Any individual who has a freshness and openness to learning new concepts could absorb the issues quickly. One believed farmers accept that police lack knowledge about farming but if they are honest about their shortcomings, farmers will make allowances for them. Another added that an officer who originally came from the land would not automatically have an interest in policing rural crime. He stated:

*A rural background is not absolutely essential. The police role is to investigate. Officers need to have an understanding of rural crime but they also need effective investigative techniques. Some officers come from the land but hate it. They might be able to muster cattle but if they can't investigate a crime, they are not going to be that effective. There is a need for a basic knowledge but officers can learn the rest on the job. It is important that a designated officer be the right sort of person with an interest in the area.*

However, those with the greatest amount of experience in investigating rural crime believed it was essential for rural crime investigators to have a background in agriculture. One believed it was necessary to have respect within the local community to encourage communication and information gathering from the local residents. An understanding of agriculture combined with a genuine interest in the issues was necessary to establish this rapport. One added:

*It helps to have a rural background - the mentality of rural people is different. Locals can be born and die in an area and own a property that is passed down in the family. City blokes have no idea. The necessary knowledge can be picked but depends on the personality of individual officers - some will pick it up - others will not.*

Another agreed:

*Officers need a rural background plus investigative skills. Sometimes it's hard to get a balance in both areas. It is hard to learn on the job if you come from the city. There is an inherent distrust of authority amongst many rural people. Officers have to be **real** with people - you can't pretend you know everything.*

One disagreed stating:

*You don't need to be a mechanic to find a stolen car. Officers just need to be prepared to listen. They can learn and understand the issues. The onus is on police to get the right information when a report is made. While it is an advantage having a rural background, the most important ingredient is the need to like the job. The stock officer here is from the city and is really enjoying his job and is successfully interacting with the local people.*

## **9.8 CONCLUSIONS**

Overall, we found police officers to be very interested in the project and keen to discuss the issues. Their responses were thoughtful and sound and reflected their practical experience and considerable reflection upon the topic.

Officers appeared to be very committed to serving their local rural community to the best of their ability. Most were clearly concerned about the extent and impact of farm crime and there was a general sense of frustration with the difficulty in apprehending and prosecuting offenders. One believed crime in rural and remote regions will increase as more thieves recognise the opportunities there. The growing numbers of urban people who relocate to rural communities seeking cheaper rent and living expenses, appear to bring a criminal culture to otherwise safe communities. Police were particularly concerned about the increasing problems of stock theft and break and enters on farms. However others called for some perspective on the issue, as they believed that crime in urban areas in rural Australia is of greater concern.

There is a very real need for an overhaul of current legislation in many aspects of the industry. Trespassers and illegal shooters are a common concern for farmers and police, and there is a need for a revision of the current legislation to enable officers to more effectively police this problem. More regulations are needed to control the ease of stolen goods being realised through clearing sales. Tighter restrictions are required to control suspected collusion between buyers at stock sales and to regulate saleyard operations to prevent the possibility of agents participating in stock thefts. Police need powers equal to those of RLPB officers to enter a property to search for stock or stop a livestock sale for reasons of suspected theft. Currently police operate under several different Acts of Parliament, many of which are out-dated. Police need their own Act to expedite investigations. The inconsistencies in legislation between states regarding stock movements and identification also need to be addressed.

Most officers acknowledged that investigating and successfully prosecuting a stock theft is extremely difficult to achieve. The onus of proof, and the need to establish guilt on the part of the offender, is almost impossible to achieve. To aid proof of ownership, farmers need to be more diligent in ensuring all livestock and other produce, farm equipment and machinery, are marked with some form of identification and that all farm records are maintained. There was a common perception amongst officers that many farmers are lax in their farm management in this regard, and that they could do more to safeguard their operations. Most officers believed the implementation of the National Livestock Identification Scheme was the only solution to tracing and solving thefts of stock. Conversely, officers were not supportive of the current system of Transported Stock Statements as a means of controlling stock theft. There is a need for tighter regulations regarding the distribution and control of these permits.

Officers appeared to be quite aware of the reasons farmers fail to report crimes, although several blamed the rural ideology of self-reliance and an apparent

tolerance of stock theft within the culture. Farmers who do report crimes should be made aware of the need to advise police if they find their missing stock. While officers agreed the PAL line was an option for farmers reporting minor crimes, most would prefer farmers report directly to police.

The officers identified difficulties they face in dealing with cases of reported thefts between neighbours. Interviews conducted with farmers who had been victims of crime revealed the complexity and incongruence within many of their accounts of theft. The interviews provided an appreciation of the problems police officers confront in deliberating on the validity of some reports. Many officers were suspicious that some farmers reported thefts for the purpose of tax evasion. While this may well be true, some farmers we interviewed were outraged when police unjustly accused them of this. Care needs to be taken, as false accusations do nothing to encourage reporting behaviour within the community or maintain confidence in police. There is a need for increased dialogue between these groups to diffuse mutual distrust.

Officers in LACs where the commander was supportive of agricultural crime investigations greatly appreciated the time they were afforded to conduct investigations and be proactive within the community. Conversely, those in LACs where the commander did not view agricultural crimes as a priority found themselves restricted in their time to achieve what they would have liked. Clearly the lack of resources and low staffing levels in rural areas are obstacles that need to be overcome. As with many government services, there is often a lack of awareness amongst administrators of the time required to provide services to clients in remote areas. The lack of time, staff and vehicles to attend crime scenes on remote properties was clearly a difficulty for officers. Currently, officers are severely disadvantaged by the lack of equipment for mustering stolen stock that need to be yarded.

Most supported the need for designated stock officers who would have the time and resources to effectively conduct agricultural crime investigations and promote crime prevention strategies. Officers who had time to regularly mix with the farming community either at stock sales or farm visits, or participating in community crime prevention programs, recognised the value of such interactions. These contacts facilitated the gathering of information and promoted cooperation and understanding between the police and the community. Magistrates also believed a designated stock squad was necessary to ensure there were police with the required knowledge to provide the necessary proof to prosecute an offender. Finally, officers emphasised that it was important for those officers responsible for agricultural crimes to have an interest in the issue. It is preferable that officers to apply for a position rather than being assigned by the Service.

# **Chapter Ten**

## **Conclusions and Implications**

### **10.1 SUMMARY**

The aim of the present study was to examine the extent and impact of property-related victimisation on farms across rural New South Wales. The study also examined the relationship between victimisation and physical deterrence factors on farms. The extent and pattern of security practices undertaken by farmers and their possible association with property crime was assessed. The study also explored the subjective attitudes of farmers relative to agricultural crime.

The report began with an overview of agriculture in Australia to provide some insight into the size and the complexity of the industry to be policed. Definitions of what constituted agricultural crime within the scope of this investigation were provided, and the various types of legislation that govern the livestock industry were reviewed. The review highlighted the lack of official recorded crime data on livestock theft or on the broader category of agricultural crime on a national basis. Data collections are also complicated by the varying methods of categorisation and collection methods between the states. It is difficult to achieve recognition of the pervasiveness of agricultural crime without the availability of specialised data.

One of the greatest obstacles confronting livestock theft investigations is the variation between the states regarding stock identification and stock movements. There is a need for uniformity in legislation between states to avoid confusion in police investigations and to aid in the trace back of stolen stock. New South Wales Police operate under several Acts of Parliament to investigate and prevent agricultural crimes. There is a need for a revision of these laws particularly as many were devised in the early 1900s.

In chapter three, a review of the literature began with an account of the history of agricultural crime in this country. Within this account, a pattern of behaviour emerged which appears to have set the stage regarding attitudes to agricultural crime in Australia today. In the 19th century, livestock were stolen for food, a practice that was tolerated by the squatters; a type of *noblesse oblige*. The practice of stealing 'killers' appears to be commonplace in Australia today, and one that is accepted as part of the fabric of life. The early settlers also stole stock for economic survival and this practice persists today. Bushrangers conducted large-scale organised thefts and modern Australia is still subject to well-organised, professional thefts of farm property and produce. In short, very little

has changed. However, farms have become larger and technology more complex, and the variety and value of farm property has increased, thus making it more and more attractive to thieves.

Little systematic information on agricultural crime exists in Australia or overseas. The few studies that have been conducted revealed that livestock theft and the theft of tools and equipment were the main types of crime experienced by Australian farmers. Illegal trespassing and shooters were a major problem for producers. Studies overseas, in both the United States and Scotland, indicated that vandalism and the theft of tools and equipment were the most common types of crime experienced on farms. However, the non-reporting of crimes to police appears to be a problem that is common to most countries. Similar reasons for the non-reporting of crimes, such as the crime was too trivial to report, or that there was little the police could do, were evident in the studies conducted in Australia, the United States and Scotland.

In chapter four, the methodology employed in this study was described. A sixfold typology of properties was developed based on categories of size, agricultural production, and geographical location. This typology was then used as the basis of analysis of the survey data. In chapter five, a profile of the sample of respondents and their properties was outlined. The sample of respondents comprised a representative cross-section of farmers across New South Wales. Most had been farming for a significant period of their lives and were long-term residents of their district. There were more smaller properties than larger ones. Most were traditional farms with a single block with house and sheds; some with adjoining blocks. The sample provided a broad representation of the varying types of terrain across New South Wales.

The most common type of agricultural production was mixed farming and grazing operations. The one limitation of the sample is that not all industry types were equally reflected in the sample. For example, there were few responses from pig farmers or market gardeners. Apart from this, the sample is suitably representative of farmers in New South Wales and the data the respondents provided reflects their knowledge and years of experience on the land.

In chapter six, the victimisation experiences of farmers in the study were presented. The results revealed that property crime on farms is ubiquitous and many producers have incurred serious financial and personal losses. The main types of crime experienced are the thefts of tools and equipment, livestock, and fuel, and illegal trespassers and shooters. It is notable that concerns about the high incidence of livestock theft appear to be unique to Australia. The greater incidence of reported thefts in northern New South Wales suggests a need for closer monitoring of theft interstate to sale outlets in southern Queensland. Of paramount concern is that stock theft increases the risk of the spread of disease, or the possibility of contaminated meat reaching the domestic or international markets.

Livestock thefts appear to be seasonal, often preceding calving, lambing or shearing, when stock are at a premium. However, there appear to be no consistent patterns in the time of day that thefts occur. Farmers appear to be resigned to the fact that there is little they, or the police, can do to prevent crime occurring. Thieves are audacious and overtly aware that there is little chance they will be detected.

Illegal trespassers and shooters appear to cause producers considerable concern. The offenders have little respect for farm property, frequently damaging crops, livestock and farm infrastructure. There is also a close association with the presence of illegal trespassers and shooters and the occurrence of other types of crime. The results indicate that there is a need for tighter legislation regarding illegal trespass and shooting on farms.

The study also explored the problem of farmers' reticence to report crimes to police. Crimes covered by insurance, such as the theft of household items or large items of machinery were more likely to be reported to police. However, there were several reasons why farmers failed to report crimes. These included the difficulty of establishing that a crime had actually occurred, and then finding sufficient evidence to report it to police in a timely fashion. Like their overseas counterparts, many farmers believe it is a waste of time reporting crimes because there is little the police can do. Others believe police have little knowledge or understanding of agricultural crime to effectively deal with investigations. These perceptions need to be addressed in any future crime prevention programs for farmers. It was notable that participants were agreeable to using the Police Assistance Line (PAL) as one option for reporting crimes to police.

The interviews with farmers found that many victims of agricultural crime suffer in silence. In some rural communities, victims are placed under pressure to conform, keep the peace, and not accuse someone in the community of theft. Great importance is placed on the strength of a united community in times of bushfire or flood. Victims would rather trade out of stock or sell up their properties than be subject to exclusion within their community. This extraordinary influence upon victims makes crime within Australia rural culture quite unique. A fundamental change in thinking is required to remove the mythical traditions surrounding this age-old crime.

In chapter seven, the types of safety and security measures employed on farms within the sample were examined. The isolation of many rural areas, the ease of access to most properties and the portable nature of livestock and equipment means farms are an inviting target for thieves, vandals and other criminals. The analysis of crime prevention on farms within the sample revealed two important findings. First, that farm crime is highly situational. Certain physical factors were associated with different kinds of crimes. Fuel, tool and machinery theft and break and enter crimes occurred more frequently on properties where there was less visibility of farm sheds and buildings from the farm residence. Livestock theft occurred more often on properties that are physically isolated, have dense cover, and contain places where thieves can operate without being seen by the owners. For malicious damage and the presence of illegal trespassers and shooters to

occur, the farm must be distant from an urban centre, yet be easily accessed from a highway, and as well, have areas that are not visible from the farm residence. Rubbish dumping was found to be more prevalent on properties that are unoccupied but in close proximity to town and a highway.

The message for farmers is that rural areas, even remote regions, are not immune from crime. Farmers in the sample were unlikely to attend to locking and securing their properties or to ensure all tools, equipment and machinery were marked with some form of identification. Farmers need to be made more aware of the problem and be more vigilant. There is a need for information on farm security to be distributed to farmers and programs developed that are designed to encourage behaviour change concerning crime prevention on farms.

The second important finding was the lack of association between precautionary behaviours and crime. Farmers say it's impossible to secure a property. The survey results would certainly support this. The only statistically significant relationships indicated a positive relationship between precautionary behaviour and crime, which contradicts the basic principles of prevention. However, the qualitative data strongly suggests that most precautionary behaviours by farmers were reactions to criminal events and as such, did not represent a proactive approach to crime prevention. Future research which takes a more longitudinal approach to farm victimisation should more closely investigate the effectiveness of preventive actions on the reduction of crime.

An important focus of the study outlined in chapter eight, concerned the attitudes of farmers to agricultural crime. Attitudes are important as they can influence a farmer's behaviour regarding reporting crimes to police and the degree they attend to security on their properties. The results revealed that farmers in general, do not regard agricultural crime as serious. However, those who had been victims of crime were more likely to rate crime as serious and were more aware of crimes occurring on other farms in their district. Most participants believed crime had increased, particularly thefts of tools, equipment, machinery and livestock.

It was important to balance respondent's concerns about crime with their views on the policing of crime in their district. The data revealed that there is widespread respect for police in rural New South Wales. This finding is similar to that found in previous studies of rural communities by the authors (Jobes *et al.*, 2001). Respondents believed the police were effective although there was an appreciation that they are short staffed. However, most did not believe police had the problem of crime on farms under control. The majority called for a greater police presence at sale yards, clearing sales, patrolling rural roads, and checking stock transports. Most respondents believed police officers needed to have skills and training in agricultural industries to effectively deal with agricultural crime.

The sample was divided upon the issue of where the responsibility lay for preventing crime on farms. While a larger proportion believed that the responsibility lay with farmers themselves, a sizeable proportion portrayed a sense of helplessness in safeguarding their property and possessions. Many despaired about the difficulty in controlling illegal trespassers and shooters on farm. The

majority called for tighter legislation regarding agricultural crime along with tougher enforcement of laws within the court system. A lack of confidence in the criminal justice system discourages farmers from reporting crimes.

Questions about who or what farmers blamed for crime on farms provided an interesting insight into the understandings and the prejudices of rural people. Unemployment and drug abuse were the most common social problems cited as the cause of crime on farms. Similar reasons were given in previous studies of crime in rural communities by the authors (Jobes *et al.*, 2001). While this perception may very well be true, unemployment is almost universally cited as a cause of crime.

There was awareness that the nature of the environment on farms, the isolation and a lack of constant guardianship on properties, makes them more vulnerable to crime. Some respondents believed the perpetrators of crime were outsiders to the community while others recognised them as locals. The problem of neighbourhood disputes is clearly significant for the victims, the community, and the police who must intervene in these situations. It is the nature of stock to wander and while the social order of rural communities expects neighbours to cooperate and return stock to their rightful owners, not all individuals conform to the same moral code. Even where a person is guilty of theft, it is almost impossible to establish guilt because the offender will claim the stock merely strayed.

The psychological reaction to agricultural crime by victims was surprisingly strong. The feelings of anger and violation were not dissimilar to any victim of break and enter to a home or business. However, there was an added sense of injustice expressed that the social order of a united, safe, honest and hardworking rural community had been violated. Others blamed themselves and were suffering poor self-esteem regarding their ability to manage their properties. Many had suffered significant financial losses. Victims of livestock theft had lost valuable bloodlines of breeding stock. Others were severely inconvenienced by the physical loss of valuable tools and equipment at critical times. Several victims of crime reported higher levels of fear of crime as a result of victimisation.

To balance the opinions of farmers on the issue of agricultural crime, the views of police were also examined. The findings were summarised in chapter nine. It was notable that the officers we interviewed were very dedicated to their role in serving their local rural community. Many were concerned about the extent and impact of farm crime and there was a general sense of frustration with the difficulty in apprehending and prosecuting offenders. One believed crime in rural and remote regions would increase as more thieves recognise the opportunities there. The increasing numbers of urban people who relocate to rural communities seeking cheaper rent and living expenses, are perceived to represent elements of a criminal culture in otherwise safe communities. Police were particularly concerned about the increasing problems of stock theft and break and enters on farms. However, others called for some perspective on the issue, as they believed that crime in urban areas in rural Australia is of greater concern. While farm

crime is serious for those who have been victims, the sharing of scarce resources necessitates allocation on a needs basis. But as one officer stated: *What do you use as a benchmark for making these decisions?*

Police investigations into agricultural crime are made difficult by the inconsistencies in legislation between states regarding stock movements and methods of identification. Antiquated laws and regulations that govern the industry also restrict police investigations. Currently, police operate under several different Acts of Parliament, many of which are out-dated. Police need their own Act to expedite investigations. Police need powers equal to those of Rural Lands Protection Board officers to enter a property to search for stolen stock, or stop a livestock sale for reasons of suspected theft. Laws relating to trespass and illegal shooting are inadequate to control a problem that is widespread and that causes considerable angst for farmers. There is insufficient legislation regarding the ability of thieves using farm-clearing sales as an avenue to profit from stolen goods. Although against the law, collusion between buyers at stock sales appears to be commonplace. The lack of regulations governing saleyard operations also prevents the possibility of agents participating in stock thefts.

Most officers acknowledged that investigating and successfully prosecuting a stock theft is an extremely difficult task. The onus of proof, and the need to establish guilt on the part of the offender, is almost impossible to achieve. To aid proof of ownership, farmers need to be more diligent in ensuring all livestock, farm equipment and machinery are marked with some form of identification and that all farm records are maintained. Many officers held a perception that farmers were lax in attending to these details. Most believed farmers could do more about security on their properties to help themselves.

Officers were mindful of the reasons farmers fail to report crimes. A rural ideology of self-reliance and an apparent tolerance of stock theft within the culture denies police valuable information and creates barriers to controlling farm crime. Police stressed that those farmers who do report crimes, must ensure that they advise police if they find their missing stock. While officers agreed the PAL line was an option for farmers reporting minor crimes, most would prefer farmers report directly to police.

It was most important for officers dealing in agricultural crime to have the support of their commanding officers. Officers in commands where the Commander did not view agricultural crimes as a priority found themselves restricted in their time to achieve what they would have liked. Clearly there is a vital need for more resources and staff in rural commands. As with many government services, there is often a lack of awareness amongst administrators of the time required to provide services to clients in remote areas. The lack of staff, time, and vehicles to attend crime scenes on remote properties was clearly an obstacle for officers. It is imperative that officers have access to the necessary equipment for mustering stolen stock that need to be yarded.

Most officers we interviewed, called for a designated stock squad in New South Wales. Squad officers would have the time and resources to effectively conduct

agricultural crime investigations and promote crime prevention strategies. The officers stressed that it was important for officers responsible for agricultural crimes to have an interest in the issue. Similarly, magistrates were also of the opinion that a designated stock squad was necessary. Such officers would have the knowledge and expertise to provide the necessary proof to prosecute an offender.

## **10.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS**

The most important general finding in the study has been that property crime victimisation on farms is extensive in New South Wales. The thefts of tools and equipment, fuel and livestock and illegal trespassers and shooters are the main concerns. The incidence of livestock theft was not as great as the theft of tools and equipment. However, concerns about the rates of livestock theft appear to be a feature of agriculture in Australia. As the data were confined to the population of rural New South Wales only, the findings cannot be generalised to other populations. As to date, there have been no other studies of agricultural crime conducted in other parts of the country, it would be useful to replicate this study in other states in order to retest and verify the results.

The impact of farm crime occurs on three levels in society. Firstly, at an individual level, there have been significant economical and personal costs. Few operations can withstand such losses, particularly in the wake of several years of economic decline in rural Australia. For those who have been victims of livestock theft, there has been the loss of valuable bloodlines of breeding stock. Some have sold up, while others have traded out of stock. Many have suffered significant psychological distress as victims of crime. Some have greater fear of crime and some have found themselves alienated within their community. Others have blamed themselves and lost faith in their ability to manage a property. Many farmers believe it is impossible to protect their properties from crime. Many victims found little sympathy from their peers. Farmers like many others, view crime as something that happens to other people and never fully appreciate concerns about safety or security until they themselves are victims of crime.

Secondly, agricultural crime threatens and undermines the cohesiveness of rural communities. Neighbourhood disputes cause rifts in the community and can isolate victims of crime. It was notable that some of the victims of such disputes were not typical farmers, one a single woman, another an absentee landowner, and another a part-time farmer with a full time office job. This suggests that stealing stock from those seen to be not 'of the community' is somehow justified in the minds of thieves. This observation should be examined in further studies.

Social change in rural Australia has seen a decline in stable communities with many farmers leaving the land and an increase in city dwellers seeking cheaper living conditions coming to the country. There is a breakdown in well-known and trusted ties in the community. Some of these newcomers convey a culture of

crime not previously experienced in rural areas. Participants blamed these newcomers, or transients in their community, as well as unemployment and drug abuse for crime in their district. The W.I. Thomas' Theorem maintains that such perceptions, be they be accurate or not, produce real consequences in rural communities. If residents believe that increasing crime threatens their community, they will respond to these threats, if only by further dividing their communities into the 'good people' and 'those people'. If residents blame individuals who engage in the behaviour, they may devalue these individuals in the local social environment. Such social divisions can diminish the sense of community and impede the achievement of common goals. On the other hand, if residents consider the causes to lie outside the community, they likely will do nothing (Hobbs, 1992).

Thirdly, agricultural crime can impact at a national level. Of paramount concern, is the threat of contaminated meat reaching domestic and international markets as the result of livestock theft. While governments and farmers are rigorous in their complicity with regulations regarding the health standards to safeguard the spread of diseases such as Johnes Disease, or Foot Rot, all of this is to no avail while livestock theft persists. Concerns about the spread of disease have been heightened of late with diseases such as Mad Cow and Foot and Mouth currently causing considerable problems in Europe. With Australia so reliant upon an export industry, governments must show greater concern with the extent of livestock theft in this country. While this may be an age-old crime in this country, there is a need for new responses.

Suggestions for improvements in the industry can be made in three areas. Firstly, there is a very real need for an overhaul of current legislation in many aspects of the industry. The diversity and the complexity of the industry and a hotchpotch of laws and regulations complicate police investigations. Trespassers and illegal shooters are a common concern for farmers and police and the study has revealed an association with their presence and an increase of theft on properties. There is a need for a revision of the current legislation to enable officers to more effectively police this problem. More regulations are needed to control the ease of stolen goods being realised through clearing sales. Tighter restrictions are required to control suspected collusion between buyers at stock sales and regulate saleyard operations to prevent the possibility of agents participating in stock thefts.

Police need powers equal to those of Rural Lands Protection Board officers to enter a property to search for stock or stop a livestock sale for reasons of suspected theft. Police need their own Act to expedite investigations. The inconsistency in legislation between states regarding stock movements and identification also need to be addressed. The introduction of a National Vendor Declaration form would be a forward step in this direction. There is also a need for tougher enforcement of laws within the court system. Australian farmers need to see changes in the laws and regulations to see Governments lead by example in eliminating agricultural crime.

While most farmers were supportive of the Transported Stock Statement as a means of providing some form of documentation to control stock movements, tighter regulations regarding the distribution and control of these permits are required as thieves can easily manipulate the current system. The majority of participants were in favour of the implementation of a National Livestock Identification Scheme as being the ultimate solution to tracing and solving thefts of stock. Government support will be required to establish this system nationally and to encourage full participation by farmers and all sale outlets to ensure the system is effective.

Secondly, there is a need for the farming community to acknowledge the problem of crime on farms and to seek ways to address the situation. The study has shown that even remote regions of the state are not immune from crime. First and foremost, farmers must ensure all stock and other farm produce, all machinery and equipment are clearly identified, that stock are checked regularly, and all farm records are kept current. The cheapest and simplest strategy for reducing risk is to make farm property less vulnerable to crime. Farmers need to walk around their property and look at it through the eyes of a thief, and be aware of possible opportunities for crime. In planning property layouts, farmers need to be less focused on practicalities and more attuned to safety and security. On a daily basis, farmers need to be more security conscious in their thinking and in their actions and to be attentive to locking and securing their property.

Farmers must work together to strengthen communities for the wider safety and security of properties. Respondents, who reported an absence of crime in their district, consistently referred to the presence of a united community where neighbours were concerned and interested in each other and were alert to strangers or suspicious activities in the area. It is only through unified community action that effective crime prevention strategies can be implemented. The formation of groups, such as *Neighbourhood Watch* or *Rural Watch*, should be encouraged in rural communities.

Neighbourhood disputes cause significant heartache for the protagonists, the community and police. There is a real need to address this issue. Farmers can set an example in the community by ensuring all stock that stray are returned to their rightful owners. However, if disputes arise, it may be useful to have some protocol set by farmer organisations. There may be a place for the use of a mediator to resolve the conflict quietly and discretely between the two parties.

Farmers need to be encouraged to report crimes to police, regardless of the time lost between the offence occurring and when it was discovered. It is important for Police to collect that information. A fundamental change in thinking and behaviour is needed to break free of traditions that surround crime on farms. While officers require training to equip them with a basic knowledge of the agricultural industry, it is expecting much of officers to have a widespread understanding of all the intricacies of the industry. Police do not have an in-depth knowledge of all crimes they must deal with. Therefore, it is in the best interest of farmers to be aware of this and ensure the officer receives and fully understands all the relevant information. Likewise, police need guidelines on

what questions to ask farmers when taking a report and seek further information to clarify any misunderstandings.

Thirdly, there are some areas in which improvements can be made in the policing of farm crime. A greater appreciation of the extent of agricultural crime is needed in the allocation of resources to rural areas. There is a need for the reinstatement of the New South Wales Police Stock Squad to control the problem of stock theft and other farm crimes. Ongoing training is necessary for all officers in rural areas to ensure they have a basic knowledge of agricultural crime.

Some officers were suspicious that some farmers reported thefts for the purpose of tax evasion. While, this may well be true, farmers we interviewed were outraged when police unjustly accused them of this. Care needs to be taken, as false accusations do nothing to encourage reporting behaviour within the community or maintain confidence in police.

There is a need for a greater police presence at saleyards, abattoirs, feedlots, clearing sales, patrolling back roads, and in checking stock transports. Police need to ensure that information on agricultural crime in a district is circulated to local farmers to raise awareness and encourage better farm security. More time should be afforded to police to interact with the community to breakdown any existing barriers and encourage the reporting of crimes. Those officers who had time to regularly mix with the farming community, either at stock sales or farm visits, or to participate in community crime prevention programs, reported the value of such interactions in gathering information and promoting cooperation and understanding between the police and the community. *Rural Watch* or *Neighbourhood Watch* programs need to be encouraged in rural communities. It is important for police to play a role in establishing such groups in providing and receiving information from the community. However, this does take time and the participation of other services in the community for coordinating such groups, such as Rural Lands Protection Board officers, is an option. It is important that groups and crime prevention programs be tailored to meet the particular needs of each community. Programs that build upon established community patterns would be more successful. *Rural Watch* groups may succeed if attached as part of an existing group, such as a rural fire brigade or farmer organisations. *Rural Watch* is more likely to succeed in socially supportive areas where there are smaller farms and residents have more opportunity to observe their neighbour's properties. In outback areas, the option of a UHF *Rural Watch* may be more suitable.

### **10.3 FURTHER RESEARCH**

Several possibilities for further research on agricultural crime emerged through the course of conducting this study. Of primary importance is a need to conduct a nation wide investigation into this issue to expose the variances in victimisation experiences across the country and the complexity and variation in the legislation

and regulations governing the industry between the states. Only future replications of this research can definitively determine how crime prevention strategies employed by farmers are related, if at all, to the reduction of crime against farms. Further research into the different types of crime prevention programs in varying types of farming areas and community settings would be useful to identify innovative approaches to combating crime.

The hypothesis that victims of crime in rural communities are more often those who are viewed as outsiders within the social fabric should be explored in further studies. The problem of fear of crime amongst farm residents is a concern that requires further study.

The is a need for further investigation of the structure and impact of less common types of agricultural crime, such as the illegal drug laboratories and cannabis plantations found on properties. Likewise, the illegal dumping of waste or rubbish on farms is an issue also worthy of further investigation. The incidence and impact of fraud upon farm businesses particularly in rural Australia's volatile economic climate would be of interest to pursue further. Studies of rural crimes not included within the scope of this study, such as the theft and traffic in native flora and fauna would be important to investigate.

## **10.4 CONCLUSIONS**

This study has revealed that agricultural crime is widespread and is extremely costly to producers, to rural communities, and ultimately to the national economy. In short, there are urgent and radical improvements to be made in the laws and regulations governing the industry. However, ultimately, change will depend upon individuals. Farmers need to be more diligent in ensuring all livestock and other farm produce are marked with identification, all farm records are maintained, regular checks are made the of the property, livestock, fences and gates, and all tools and equipment and machinery are locked away when not in use. There is a need for ongoing communication between neighbours to encourage crime prevention at a community level. There needs to be more cooperation and communication between farmers and police with both parties seeking to share information to work towards a united front against crime. There is no longer any room for a cultural acceptance of a certain amount of crime in rural communities. Crime on farms has been a problem since the beginning of agriculture in this country. Australian farmers are now the most efficient in the world. It is time to extend that efficiency to ensure there is no place for the persistence of agricultural crime in this country.

## **10.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations have been drawn from the findings of this study.

### **10.5.1 For farmers**

#### **Recommendation 1**

That NSW Farmers, Landcare and other farmer organisations be proactive in distributing information on crime prevention to farmers to raise awareness of the issue and to encourage safety and security on farms. Furthermore, that farmers be made aware of necessity to ensure all stock are identified, all tools equipment and machinery are marked with an identification number, and all farm records are maintained.

#### **Recommendation 2**

That farmers be encouraged to work with local police to prevent crime, be alert to strangers or suspicious activities in their district and ensure that they pass information on to police. Furthermore, that communities be encouraged to form local groups concerned with crime, such as Rural Watch or Neighbourhood Watch.

#### **Recommendation 3**

That farmers be encouraged to report crimes to police.

#### **Recommendation 4**

That farmers be encouraged to be aware of their neighbours' brands or earmarks and be alert and watchful to possible thefts of their neighbour's stock at local stock sales.

#### **Recommendation 5**

That farmers identify and compile a list of reliable shooters in their district and only accept shooters on their property who come with a reliable reference from other farmers.

#### **Recommendation 6**

That farmers be encouraged to alert their neighbours each time they muster stock.

#### **Recommendation 7**

That NSW Farmers, Landcare and other farmer organisations be encouraged to promote the use of the Police Assistance Line (PAL) as an option for farmers to report **minor** crimes to police while encouraging farmers to report all **major** crimes directly to their local police station.

**Recommendation 8**

That NSW Farmers work with NSW Police to develop protocols to resolve disputes between neighbours concerning suspected stock theft or implement a plan for providing trained mediators to solve disputes.

**Recommendation 9**

That a concerted publicity campaign be conducted in rural areas to try and breakdown existing traditional beliefs and actions surrounding crimes on farms, to encourage farmers to do the right thing and return straying stock to their rightful owners, and to encourage the reporting of crimes to police.

**Recommendation 10**

That Livestock Agents be encouraged to monitor saleyards for stolen stock passing through stock sales.

### **10.5.2 For police**

**Recommendation 11**

That more recognition be given by the Police Service to the costs of agricultural crime to producers, the time, staff, and resources required to investigate crimes on farms, and accordingly to provide more resources for rural Local Area Commands.

**Recommendation 12**

That the Police Stock Squad be reinstated in New South Wales. That this squad comprise officers specialising in rural crime being stationed in all rural Local Areas Commands, as additional staff.

**Recommendation 13**

That police officers in rural Local Area Commands have access to all the necessary resources required to muster stolen stock.

**Recommendation 14**

That Commanders of rural Local Area Commands be supportive of designated rural crime officers in their command in providing sufficient time and resources to effectively police crime and be proactive in the community.

**Recommendation 15**

That a recruitment drive for the police service be conducted in rural communities to encourage those with a knowledge and an interest in the agricultural industries to consider joining the service to work in the area of agricultural crime. That the Police Service consider incentives such as guaranteed work in rural areas or subsidised training fees to encourage cadets from rural areas.

**Recommendation 16**

That more resources be provided for Operation Nicaragua to operationalise an information database to record information on rural crime matters, such as the suspicious activities relating to the movement of stock.

**Recommendation 17**

That police from New South Wales and Queensland collaborate to conduct more border crossing operations to monitor interstate movement of stolen stock and provide an information exchange and knowledge building for participating officers. Furthermore, that similar border crossing operations be conducted on the South Australian and Victorian borders to monitor stock crossings with those states.

**Recommendation 18**

That police increase their presence with regular attendance at saleyards, feedlots, clearing sales, abattoirs, tanneries, patrolling back roads and checking stock transports and Transported Stock Statements.

**Recommendation 19**

That police conduct more visits to farmers, shearing sheds to establish networks of communication. Furthermore, that police offer to conduct security checks on local farms.

**Recommendation 20**

That police in rural areas utilise the media as well as the mail out systems of networks in place in a community, such as farmer organisations or local agribusinesses to deliver information to farmers about crime in the area or crime prevention strategies for farms.

**Recommendation 21**

That regular networks be created in rural communities between police and local professional groups, such as Rural Lands Protection Board rangers, Stock and Station Agents, officers from the departments of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the RSPCA, and local farmers, for information exchange as well as the provision of regular training for officers in agricultural crime.

**Recommendation 22**

That the Police Service ensure that all officers assigned to rural areas have access to training in agricultural crime.

### **10.5.3 For governments**

#### **Recommendation 23**

That classifications of agricultural crime including livestock theft be made uniform across all states to ensure data collections nationally are compatible and consistent.

#### **Recommendation 24**

That the Australian Bureau of Statistics collects and collates data for livestock theft and the broader category of agricultural crime.

#### **Recommendation 25**

That the Police Service have their own Act of Parliament to provide officers with more powers to effectively act against rural crime rather than acting under the Rural Lands Protection Board Act.

#### **Recommendation 26**

That the government provide financial assistance for the implementation of the National Livestock Identification scheme in New South Wales, by encouraging and assisting farmers to participate in the program and ensuring scanners are available for all highway police patrols and all livestock sale outlets, such as saleyards, abattoirs and feedlots.

#### **Recommendation 27**

That there be a National Broker Index set up as a register of all livestock sales across the country to track stock sales and movements.

#### **Recommendation 28**

That there be uniform national legislation to overcome the inconsistencies between the states in legislation on stock identification and movements.

#### **Recommendation 29**

That stricter regulations be implemented to control the accessibility and availability of Transported Stock Statements to monitor stock movements.

#### **Recommendation 30**

That the Transported Stock Statement be combined with the Vendor Declaration form to simplify paper work. Furthermore, that a standardised National Vendor Declaration form be implemented so that paper work will be uniform across states to solve difficulties in policing livestock movements both intrastate and interstate.

**Recommendation 31**

That legislation be implemented for increased penalties and tighter control of trespass on private property.

**Recommendation 32**

That legislation be implemented for penalties and tighter control over hunting without permission on any land.

**Recommendation 33**

That tighter restrictions be put in place to control suspected collusion between buyers at stock sales

**Recommendation 34**

That tighter restrictions be implemented for saleyard operations to prevent the possibility of agents participating in stock thefts.

**Recommendation 35**

That tighter controls be implemented over livestock sales over the border to Queensland. Furthermore, that controls at border crossings be extended beyond the current daylight hours.

**Recommendation 36**

That tighter restrictions be put in place to control the use of clearing sales as a means of realising of stolen items.

**Recommendation 37**

That guidelines be set to maintain some control over producers who play the livestock markets, effecting a rapid turnover of stock, which creates an avenue for possible theft.

**Recommendation 38**

That legislation be drafted to control the poaching of feral goats.

**Recommendation 39**

That tougher enforcement of penalties relating to agricultural crime be enforced within the court system.

## References

- Alchin, C. (2001). *Transported Stock Statement (TSS) - Questions and Answers*, New South Wales department of Agriculture, URL  
<http://www.agric.nsw.gov.au/reader/1747>
- Australian Broadcasting Commission (2000). 'Man charged over the theft of 150 thousand dollars worth of stock', *ABC National Rural News*, [http://www.abc.net.au/rural/wa/index/WAMonth\\_May2001.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/rural/wa/index/WAMonth_May2001.htm)
- Australian Bureau of Resource Economics (ABARE). (2001). *Australian Farm Surveys Report 2000*, Canberra, Australian Bureau of Resource Economics.
- Australian Institute of Criminology (2000). Selected crime profiles 'Other theft', URL, <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/facts/1999/sec3.html#other>
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).
- (2001a). *Principal Agricultural Commodities Produced, 1999-2000*, Catalogue No. 7501.0
  - (2001b). *Agricultural Commodities, 1999-2000*, Catalogue No. 7121.0.
  - (2000c). *Principal Agricultural Commodities, 1999-2000* Catalogue No. 7111.0
  - (2000d). *Agriculture Australia, 1998-1999*, Catalogue No. 7113.0.
  - (2000e). *Recorded Crime, Australia*, Catalogue No. 4510.0
- Baggio, G. (2000). 'Sheep go missing', *AM, ABC News Online*, Australian Broadcasting Commission, 30th August 2000, <http://www.abc.net.au/am/s169329.htm>
- Bateman, G. (2001). 'Crime busting in the country', *ABC Rural Radio*, March 8th 2001, Sydney, Australian Broadcasting Commission.  
[http://www.abc.net.au/rural/nsw/index/NSWMonth\\_March2001.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/rural/nsw/index/NSWMonth_March2001.htm)
- Bean, T.L. and Lawrence, L.D. (1978). *Crime on Farms in Hampshire County, West Virginia: A Pilot Study*, Research Monograph 69, Morgantown West Virginia: Centre for Extension and Continuing Education, West Virginia University.
- BOCSAR (Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research) (2001). *New South Wales Recorded Sentences for Livestock Theft Section 126 of the Crimes Act*;

- 1998, 1999. New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research: Sydney
- BOCSAR (Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research) (2001). *New South Wales Recorded Crime Statistics by Area, 1995-2000*, New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research: Sydney  
URL, [http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/bocsar1.nsf/pages/lga\\_home](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/bocsar1.nsf/pages/lga_home)
- Brantingham, P.L. & Brantingham, P.J. (1993). 'Environment, Routine, and Situation: Toward a Pattern Theory of Crime.' In: R.V. Clarke & M. Felson (eds.), *Routine Activity and Rational Choice*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Cawood, M. (2001). 'Brave new world of animal ID', *The Land*, 3 May, 2001, p.39.
- Cleland, C.L. (1990). *Crime and Vandalism on Farms in Tennessee: Farmer Opinions About Experiences With*. Knoxville: Agricultural Experiment Station, Institute of Agriculture, University of Tennessee.
- Deane, J. (2001). *Brack's Government backs National Livestock ID Scheme*, Media Release, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2001, Victorian Government.  
<http://www.vic.gov.au>.
- Deeds, J., Frese, W., Hitchner, M. & Solomon, M. (1992). *Farm Crime in Mississippi*. Mississippi State: Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, Mississippi State University.
- Donnermeyer, J.F. (1987). *Crime Against Farm Operations*. Columbus: Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, The Ohio State University.
- Dunkelberger, J.E., Clayton, J.M., Myrick, R.S. & Lyles, G.J. (1992). *Crime and Alabama Farms: Victimization, Subjective Assessment, and Protective Action*. Auburn: Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, Auburn University.
- Farmer, F.L. & Voth, D.E. (1989). *Ecological Characteristics of Farm Victimization in Arkansas*. Fayetteville: Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Arkansas.
- Felson, M. (1998). *Crime and Everyday Life*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- George Street Research. (1999). *Crime and the Farming Community: The Scottish Farm Crime Survey, 1998*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Office, Central Research Unit.

- Hanson, L. (2001). Stock theft sparks alert, Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2001, *North Queensland Review*, Rural Press, Queensland.
- Harpley, L. (2000). 'You're nicked!' *The Land*, 14 December, 2000, p.1.
- Hobbs, D. (1994). 'The context of rising rates of rural violence and substance abuse: The problems and potential of rural communities'. In: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, *Perspectives on violence and substance use in rural America*, Oak Brook, IL: Midwest Regional Centre for Drug-Free Schools and Communities and North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 115-124.
- Hurley, D. (2000). 'Police tip cattle duffing rise', *Northern Daily Leader*, May 25, 2000, p.3.
- Jenkins, J., Ravenscroft, N., Philips, D., & Bennett, M. (1998). Rural recreation: perspectives on landholder attitudes and public access to private lands, *Tourism and Visitor Attractions, leisure, culture and commerce*, Leisure Studies Association; Eastbourne U.K.
- Jobes, P.C., Barclay, E., & Donnermeyer, J.F. (2000). *A Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis of the Relationship between Community Cohesiveness and Rural Crime, Part 1*. Armidale: The Institute for Rural Futures, University of New England.
- Limb, J. (2001). 'Stock theft on the rise', *Landline*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, <http://www.abc.net.au/landline/stories/s279004.htm>
- Margetts, L. (1998). Stock squads are the key to the fight against rural crime, *Vedette*, 171, 26-27.
- Matka, E., (1997). *Uses and Abuses of Crime Statistics*, Crime and Justice Bulletin, 11, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research; Sydney.
- Mazerolle, L. (2000). 'Mapping with Purpose: Using Theory to Guide Crime Mapping'. Paper presented at: Conference on *Crime Mapping*. Adelaide: The Australian Institute of Criminology and the Key Center for Social Applications of GIS, Adelaide University.
- McCarthy, P. (1987). *The Man Who Was Starlight*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin.
- McQuilton, J. (1993). 'Comparative Frontiers: Australia and the United States'. *Australian Journal of American Studies*, 12(1): 26-46.
- Meat and Livestock Authority Australia (MLA) (2001). *Producers and Lot Feeders*, URL <http://www.mla.com.au/>
- Netzel, A. (2001). 'Drug makers steal farmers, fertilizer', *The Columbus Dispatch*, 14 June 2001, Columbus, Ohio.

New South Wales Farmers (1999). *NSW Police must get serious on stock theft*, press release NSW Farmers, November 5, 1999,  
<http://www.nswfarmers.org.au/Press/1999/November/26899.htm>

NSW Police Service (1999). ‘Stock thefts throughout NSW’, *Police Service Weekly*, 11, 20.

NSW Police Service (2000). *New South Wales Police Service Rural Crime Investigation Manual*, Sydney, New South Wales Police Service.

NSW Police Service (2001). *New South Wales Police Service Annual Report 1999-2000*, URL [http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/annual\\_report/ar.cfm](http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/annual_report/ar.cfm).

O’Block, R.L., Donnermeyer, J.F., & Doeren, S.E. (1991). ‘Farm and ranch security’, *Security and Crime Prevention*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) Butterworth-Heinemann; Stoneham, MA., pp.133-146.

O'Connor, M. and Gray, D. (1989). *Crime in a Rural Community*. Annandale, NSW: The Federation Press.

Pastoral and Agricultural Crime Working Party (2000). *Draft Report to the Minister for Police and the Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Land and Water Conservation*, Sydney, NSW Police Ministry.

Peale, K.O. (1990). *Crime and Vandalism on Farms in Kentucky*. Frankfort: Kentucky State University.

Stackpool, A. (2001). *Frequently asked questions about bushrangers*, The Bushranger Site, School of Curriculum Studies, University of New England.  
<http://scs.une.edu.au/Bushrangers/faq.htm>

Stayner, R. & Crosby, E. (1998). *Welfare and Support Needs of Australian Farm Families*. Report prepared by The Rural Development Centre, University of New England for The Rural Industries, Research and Development Corporation, Canberra.

Swanson, C.R., Chamelin, N.C. & Territo, L. (2000). *Criminal Investigation*. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Tittle, C.R. (2000). ‘Theoretical Development in Criminology.’ In: G. LaFree (ed.), *Criminal Justice 2000: Volume 1 – The Nature of Crime: Continuity and Change*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

Torning, P. (1991). ‘A Study of Crime on Farms in the Goulburn Police District: September 1990 to August 1991’. Unpublished paper.

Turner, R. (2000). ‘Stock thefts on rise in NW’, *Country Leader*, 22 May, 2000, p.1.

Walker, J. (1995). 'Crimes against businesses in Australia', *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, No. 45, Canberra, Australian Institute of Criminology.

Walkabout, (2001). 'Muttaburra', *Walkabout, Australian Travel Guide*, URL, <http://www.walkabout.fairfax.com.au/smh/locations/QLDMuttaburra.shtml>

Wockner, T. (1998). Laptop checks on Duffing, *Vedette*, 169, 24.

# **Appendix 1**

## **Acknowledgment:**

These crime prevention strategies have been developed from the ideas and tried and true initiatives given to us by farmers across New South Wales. We sincerely thank them for their valued contribution. Additional material has been drawn from the South Australian Neighbourhood Watch Association.

URL <http://www.nhwatch asn.au/>

Although several of these steps may seem somewhat drastic and time consuming, they are worthwhile if a theft is prevented. You are the best judge of whether it is worth the time and trouble in your particular situation.

## **IDENTIFICATION OF FARM MACHINERY, TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT**

---

There has been an alarming increase in the thefts of tools and equipment such as chain saws, grinders, whipper-snippers, air compressors, saddles, bridles and harnesses from farm sheds; fencing materials, irrigation pipes and sprinkler heads from paddocks; and batteries and UHF radios from tractors, utilities or other farm vehicles. Items that are light and easy to carry and can be sold quickly are targeted. Farmers pay for the loss of theft of farm equipment through the high cost of replacing equipment and through lost work time.

### **What you can do**

Farmers can discourage and minimise the theft of property from their farms by providing a way for police to easily identify stolen property. Proof of ownership is essential in any court of law to secure a conviction.

- Use metal engravers or stamps to mark tools, vehicles, machinery and equipment with a permanent identification number.
- Make a habit of doing this each time you purchase something new. Encourage your local business suppliers to offer free engraving with a sale in place of the usual free calendar or watch!

- Maintain an inventory of all plant, tools and equipment, especially those of considerable value (*A sample inventory form is attached*). Record the serial number for each piece of equipment and include a description of the type, make and brand of each piece and other distinguishable markings. Keep a record of the location of the identification marks on each piece. For farm machinery, record the chassis and model numbers. It is good idea to take a photograph of each piece of equipment for easy identification.
- Take photographs or videos of valuable or unusual property. Try to have some identifiable aspect of your farm in the background.
- Always keep tools and small pieces of machinery locked away. Do not leave them lying around.
- Store tools on a shadow-board. Simply trace around the outside of a tool on a board where you can hang all your equipment. That way if something is missing you can easily identify what it is.
- Report all thefts to Police. They need to know where thefts are occurring in a district so that they can target a crime offensive. Report major thefts directly to police. Minor incidents can be reported using the freecall Police Assistance Line on 131444.
- All stolen goods need a ready market. The police are keen to hear about suspicious activities. This will enable them to begin an investigation to stop thieves.
- Farm clearing sales can be a point of sale for stolen goods. Be suspicious of outside vendors who may wish to sell goods at a local sale. Report all suspicious activities to police.

## **Where should farm equipment be marked?**

To make it easy for the police to locate your number if your equipment is stolen, place a primary marking in a uniform location. Then make a secondary marking in some out-of-the-way place, known only to you. Then, if your primary identification number is removed or destroyed, you can still claim your property because your secondary mark will provide a positive means of identification.

## **What if I sell or trade my equipment?**

Some equipment may change hands many times. It is suggested that you notify the purchaser or whoever takes your equipment in trade that you have marked your equipment with an ID number and suggest that the new owner put his/her mark below yours. In this way the equipment can be traced from one owner to another.

## **Some useful tips for marking your equipment**

- Pitted or painted surfaces should be sanded to insure a clear-cut imprint.
- Try an imprint on a piece of metal to get accustomed to the surface.
- If you make a mistake or the number is blurred, DO NOT ATTEMPT TO SAND OR GRIND IT OUT. Simply make a second imprint directly under the blurred number.
- Heavy duty marking tools should be used on farm equipment.
- Place an identification number in at least two places, one easily visible and another in a hidden location. A useful identification is to mark equipment with your driver's licence number followed by the letters 'NSW' for your state, or Rural Lands Protection Board PIN number. Better still, use the property's stock brand. Thieves may overlook such a mark.
- Paint a spot for example, in an iridescent green colour, on all tools, equipment and machinery. If the tools are stolen and subsequently found in the same district, police can quickly identify them. There is a need to link the paint spot with the owner or victim. Therefore, it would be necessary to have a second mark as well as a paint spot, such as a second identification number in a hidden location.
- Paint your name on valuable tarpaulins in letters at least one foot high.

## **FARM MACHINERY THEFT**

---

The theft of farm machinery causes huge personal and financial losses for farmers. Tractors, ploughs, headers, augers, generators, welders, motorbikes and quad runners are attractive targets for thieves. The theft of machinery parts, such as header lights, batteries, and radios from tractors is also a problem for many farmers.

The costs are high for farmers in replacing stolen equipment. Worst yet, if the theft occurs during the critical periods of planting or harvesting, loss of productivity can compound the total financial damage.

## **Protecting farm equipment**

- It is sometimes necessary to leave equipment in a paddock overnight. If it is possible, park machinery out of sight of a public road, behind trees or a hill. Proximity to roads increases the probability of theft or vandalism. If possible, position machinery so it can be seen from the farm house or alternatively, park it near a neighbour's house.
- Remove keys from machinery.

- The doors of machinery with cabs should be locked.
- To prevent thefts of radios from machinery, try to have radios installed that operate only with a security code that is connected to the auxiliary power of the machine.
- When there is a break down, if possible return the machinery to the main shed area. Too often farmers pull down a tractor in a paddock, leave it unattended while seeking replacement parts, and return to find several parts missing.
- Always know where your equipment is located on farm.
- Try to secure or immobilise vehicles or equipment when not in use. Machinery left in paddocks overnight or for longer periods should be disabled by removing the distributor cap or battery. Machinery stored outside or in remote sheds and only used in certain times of the year should also be disabled in this way.
- You can chain machinery together or to a tree or another strongly anchored objects.
- You can chain and lock the front wheel to rear wheel or axle.
- Whenever possible, store large farm machinery in a secured shed, preferably in sight of a farmhouse.
- Ensure that all machinery and pieces of equipment are marked with identification and maintain an inventory with a description, a record of the serial number, chassis and model numbers of machines.
- Using metal engravers or stamps to mark machinery, vehicles and equipment with and NSW for your state and your driver's licence number, your Rural Lands protection Board PIN number or your stock brand. Photograph or video machinery and valuable items of equipment and store them with the inventory.
- Stolen goods need a ready market. Be wary of offers that are too good to be true - they usually are! Report all suspicious incidents to police.

## **FUEL TANK SECURITY**

---

The theft of fuel is one of the most common types of theft on farms. With the current high price of fuel, thefts from fuel tanks on properties have escalated. Consequently, the financial losses to farmers have increased.

### **Locking your tanks**

The first step in preventing fuel theft is to lock your fuel tank. While a determined thief can use bolt cutters, a good strong steel padlock and chain can prevent a theft. Many people make the mistake of putting a \$2.00 lock on a \$1000 fuel tank. If there is an electrically controlled pump on the tank, make sure

the control switch is located in a locked building or in the house, and that the electricity is turned off when the fuel tank is not in use.

## **Location of fuel tanks**

Fuel theft can be reduced by properly locating storage tanks. Often the primary consideration for the location of fuel tanks is convenience. This is important, but what is convenient for the resident may be equally convenient for the thief. If the tank is located above the ground, an ideal placement would be where the tank is visible from the house, but concealed from the roadway. The further the tank is from the road, the better. Most thieves will think twice about stealing when they do not have an easy escape route.

- Keep the area around the pumps or tanks clear of equipment and other obstructions – don't give thieves cover.
- If there is more than one tank, they can be clustered in the same area. This will simplify observation and make it easier to fence or put alarms on the tanks if it becomes necessary.
- The best location for a fuel tank is underground. Tanks are less visible and much more difficult to steal from when placed underground. However, it also adds to the installation cost and therefore, may not always be practical.
- If there are both diesel and fuel tanks, use a colour coded system to identify the contents, rather than labelling them. Make it as difficult as possible for the thief to identify a target.
- On large properties, where tanks are needed to service isolated areas of the property, it is important to ensure they are kept locked and they are located out of sight of a public road. It is a good idea to only fill these tanks over the time they are in use, such as sowing or harvest.
- Likewise, mobile tanks used to service farm machinery over busy periods also need to be locked and stored out of sight. Ideally when not in frequent use, these tanks should be returned to the main storage area.

## **Security**

- Close and lock the valves on all on-ground and overhead tanks when not in use.
- Turn off power to pumps.
- Keep track of fuel purchases. Dip your tanks daily and monitor your fuel usage so that you know if there is an unexplained loss of fuel. Install a flow metre to supervise fuel use.
- Keep a book at the tank for each user to record fuel usage for various vehicles and machinery. It is a good idea to fence the area around the fuel tanks. Consider locating the tanks close to an outbuilding in which tools and other valuable equipment are stored, and then erecting a security fence

around the entire area. Gates should also be locked with good quality padlocks and chains.

- Security lights, if properly installed, can provide excellent low cost security for fuel tanks located within the farmhouse and yard area. To be effective, lights should be placed so that they illuminate the wider area between the house and the tanks. Avoid placing lights so that they shine directly onto the tank. This will cause the tank to be silhouetted and thus stand out to a passer by if your house is located close to the road. Also ensure that the lights do not point directly toward the house. This causes a blinding effect and makes observation of the tanks difficult. Some lights are brighter than others. A bright light, although an effective illuminator of the area, provides too sharp a contrast to allow one to see into the surrounding area. Lights can be linked to a sensor illuminating only with the presence of physical movement in the area or reactive to light coming on and staying on throughout the night.

## **What to do if you are experiencing theft**

- Notify the police. Many farmers fail to report fuel theft because it is difficult to tell exactly how much fuel has been stolen. However the police would prefer to know about these crimes in case there is a pattern of thefts in your district. The more information they have, the better equipped they are.
- Notify your fuel agent. Ask your agent to notify you exactly when and where he refills your tanks on farm.
- If the problem persists, ask local police about setting a trap for the thieves by adding an agent to the fuel, which can corrupt an engine. These alternatives need to be conducted with police supervision and in liaison with local garages.

## **FARMHOUSE SECURITY**

---

Farmhouses are particularly vulnerable to crime when they are left unattended. Houses that are large and in isolated places; being some distance from a road or not in sight of neighbours, are easy targets for thieves. Across New South Wales, there has been an alarming increase in break and enters to farm houses with everything in the home being taken, even the food in the cupboards. Many country homes have valuable antiques, guns and other items that are particularly attractive to thieves.

Homes are vulnerable when the occupants are elsewhere on the property, go to town or whenever they are away for any period of time, for example to go on

holiday. Many weekend or hobby farms where owners are absent for weeks at a time, are particularly vulnerable. There are some precautions that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of break and enter when you are away from your home for any period of time.

## Create signs of life

- One of the most effective strategies for securing a vacant home is to make it appear as if someone is inside. ‘Signs of life’ can be easily created.
- Keep blinds and curtains in normal positions. Many people have the habit of completely closing blinds and curtains before leaving home. This serves as a signal that the home is vacant. Leave blinds and curtains in their normal positions.
- Don’t advertise that you are not at home by leaving notes for traders or friends.
- Have a dog or two near the house. A good watchdog does deter thieves.
- Walk around your house and yard area and look at it through the eyes of a thief. Identify those areas where thieves could break in, and make them more secure.
- Trees planted as windbreaks surrounding your whole house yard area make a good screen for thieves. Confine windbreaks to just one side of your yard
- Ensure that doors and windows are of solid construction.
- Fit Australian standard deadlocks to all outside doors, reinforced with strong bolts, which are preferably key-operated.
- Fit locks on windows.
- Keep firearms in a securely locked steel cabinet and store ammunition separately.
- If you have to keep cash or jewellery in the house, a floor safe is a good idea.
- Ensure all household items, tools and equipment are marked with an identification number. Engravings enable police to identify stolen articles and increase the chance of recovery.
- Use a security-marking device to mark items with your driver’s licence number and ‘NSW’ for your State.
- Photograph or video your most valuable items against a ruler to indicate size.
- Have an inventory of all items of value (*A sample inventory is attached*).
- Take photographs or videotape of the interior of your house. Make sure cupboards and wardrobes are open. Store photos or tapes with the inventory list. Inventories and photographs help people to remember things that are missing for making reports to insurers and the police.
- Anything of value should be marked and listed: televisions, video and DVD players, radios, stereo systems, antiques, guns, tools, musical

- instruments, artwork and furniture. Televisions and most household items can be marked with an engraving tool. Other items can be marked with an invisible ink pen.
- Periodically update the inventory with new purchases and removing those items that have been sold or discarded. Christmas time is a good time to do this.

## **Insurance pays**

It is very important to have adequate insurance cover. It pays to have full cover against theft of vehicles, equipment and livestock, as well as for the contents of your buildings. Advice from your insurance company is free - whether it's about insurance itself, or on ways to make your farm more secure.

## **Lighting**

Automatic timer devices make it possible to turn lights on and off in a vacant house. It is best to locate timers in the living areas, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom etc. You can sequence the lights to recreate a daily living pattern. For example, set a timer to turn a living areas light on at dusk and off at 11.30 p.m. and turn a bedroom light on at 11.25 p.m. and off twenty minutes later. An additional timer might be used to turn a radio or television on or off. There are several automatic timer devices on the market, which allow lights to be turned on and off several times a day. The relatively low cost of keeping a few lights on is a good investment in security.

- Thieves hate bright lights. Install security lights operating on timing switches at each end of a house focused on the house yards to illuminate the house and yard area. Lights can be left on all night operated by a sensor to darkness.

## **Other options**

Video surveillance cameras are also an option to ensure the identification of thieves. Thieves often come to a house and knock and then pretend they are looking for someone if someone answers. If no one is around, they then take what they want. It is important not to use cheap videotape in a camera or replay it several times over. Too often when a theft occurs, all that is available on a security camera tape is snow.

You can display stickers on doors or windows to serve as a warning to potential thieves. Consider forming a *Neighbourhood Watch* group in your district.

*Neighbourhood Watch* or *Rural Watch* signs are available to display on your property boundary.

### **When you go on holiday:**

- Lock and secure all outside entrance doors and windows.
- Lock all chemicals, tools and equipment in sheds.
- Advise relatives or a trusted neighbour of your plans. Encourage neighbours to report any suspicious activity. Leave details where you can be contacted.
- Ask someone to check inside and around the house periodically.
- Avoid leaving keys for those who will be checking on the home. It is preferable to give that person a key.
- If there have been problems with break and enters in your district, advise local police of your travel plans. If your property is not too far from town, ask that Police conduct some patrols in your area while you are away.
- If you have particular concerns about theft, consider hiring someone live in while you are away. However, make sure your neighbours and relatives know about this arrangement.
- **Do not advertise your forthcoming travel plans in public or in the local newspaper.**
- **Avoid signs of ‘no life’:** Have mail and newspapers held at the post office or arrange for its collection by a relative or trusted neighbour.
- Lower the volume of the telephone bell. The sound of a phone ringing without an answer is an obvious sign there is no one home. If you have an answer machine avoid recordings that tell the caller you are out of town. Simply indicate that say you cannot come to the phone right now but that you will return the call as soon as possible.

### **Other homes on your property**

With the economic decline in rural Australia over the past decade, many farmers have left the land. Some farms have been bought up by neighbours to form larger holdings. The result is an increase in the number of vacant homes on properties that are vulnerable to theft and vandalism.

- Try to rent or have employees occupy uninhabited homes on your property. Not only will this protect the home, but also occupants will increase surveillance on your property.
- Try to rent homes to people you know, or ask for references.

## LIVESTOCK THEFT

---

The excellent prices currently being received for livestock makes stock theft a very lucrative business. Some producers have lost truckloads of stock while others are troubled with the persistent loss of one or two. There are some things a producer can do to deter thieves.

### What you can do

- There are some things you can do to deter thieves.
- Regularly check your stock and the paddocks and fences where the stock are grazing - daily if possible - especially around sale days.
- Keep all paddock, shed and stockyard gates closed and locked.
- Keep your fences and gates in good repair. Gate hinges should have capping hinges so they cannot be removed easily.
- Ditches form a natural barrier. Cattle grids should be removable and locked out of position when not in use.
- Use locking posts to obstruct large openings to yards etc.
- Go around your property and look at it through the eyes of a thief. Look for areas where thieves could easily operate. This particularly applies to paddocks that border a public road.
- Be aware of strangers or unfamiliar vehicles in your area. Write down their registration number and all other relevant information and pass it onto your local police. Also alert your neighbours.
- Be visible on your property. Leave tyre tracks and evidence that you are frequently checking your paddocks.
- Have a plan of your property, indicating when and where things happen, and where stock and equipment are located.
- If you have two or more accesses to your property, ask neighbours to watch for strange vehicles.
- Liaise with your trusted neighbours; tell them when you are away from your property and where you can be contacted. Suggest they do the same.
- Locate stockyards away from public roads or main entrances to your property. Keep them locked when not in use. Similarly ensure loading ramps are locked and stored out of sight when not in use.
- Ask shooters who request access to your property for a reference from a farmer in the district, or use shooters from reputable Shooters Associations.
- If you have been a victim of livestock theft, you may consider an alarm linked to an electric fence with a sensor that activates a siren or bell in your house if the fence is cut or broken.
- Video surveillance cameras are another option, expensive but the costs could well outweigh the losses through theft. It is important not to use

- cheap videotape in a camera or replay it several times over. Too often when a theft occurs, all that is available on a security camera tape is snow.
- Consider using closed circuit TV so you can watch animals in sheds or yards from your home. This can be especially useful during busy times like the lambing or shearing season.

## Reporting a theft

**If livestock are stolen, it is important that you report the crime to police as soon as possible.** Many farmers fail to report thefts because they may be unsure of exactly how many stock are missing. Some believe it is a waste of time reporting crimes because a theft would be impossible to prove, or because of the amount of time between a theft's occurrence and its detection. Others believe it's a waste of time reporting because they believe there is little the police can do. Sometimes, the suspected offender is someone in the district and dobbing them in to police is not an option in a small community.

However, the police insist that even if some time has passed since the event, and regardless of the number of stock missing, they would still like to hear about it. There may be a pattern of crimes in the district and with more information, they can begin to target a crime investigation. Ideally, the sooner a theft is reported, the better. You will need to provide police with an accurate description of your stock including:

- the breed, age and sex of the animals,
- the type of identification used and the identification numbers,
- where the stock were located,
- when you last checked the stock, and
- any other relevant information.

Police emphasise the importance of stock identification and accurate farm records for tracing stolen stock. The police service is providing training for officers in rural areas to better equip them for investigating these types of crimes. However, when reporting a crime, it is in your best interest to ensure the officer understands all the information you provide. **It is also very important to let the police know should you find your stock again.**

## Identification

**Livestock identification is absolutely essential** for proof of ownership and ultimately the return of stolen stock and the eventual conviction of offenders. There can be several witnesses to a stock theft but without proof of ownership, the

thief will never be prosecuted. Livestock identification can be ear tags, earmarks, tattooing, branding or microchips.

- **Tattooing** is often the cheapest form of permanent identification and is suitable for all breeds of livestock. Tattooing is generally done in one or both ears, but can also be placed in the loose skin around the tail or head, or in the lip. One suggestion is to tattoo in the inside of the ear and also in some other unsuspecting area, such as the inside of the beast's toes.
- **Freeze branding, hot iron branding or electrical branding** is the most visible marking system.
- Take **photographs or videos** of valuable animals with the brand and/or ear tags clearly visible. Photographs of mobs of your stock will also aid police in an investigation. It is also a good idea to have some identifying aspect of your property in the background, such as your house or sheds.
- The use of **electronic identification** is strongly recommended. Many farmers and police believe that the introduction of the **National Livestock Identification Scheme** is ideal for the control of stock theft. This involves stock being identified by a micro chip in the ear or with a bolus which is inserted down the throat of the animal where it remains lodged in the rumen of the animal for its lifetime. These devices offer unalterable permanent identification. Some graziers have argued that the system is expensive; rumen boluses are around \$7.00 each but they can be recycled, or you can lease them for as little as \$2.00. The cost is cheap insurance for livestock particularly where losses from theft are considerable. For more information contact your local Rural Lands Pastoral Protection Ranger or the NSW Department of Agriculture.
- **Maintain stock records.** Keep accurate records of all livestock bought and sold from your property. Record all births and death of livestock on your property. Record all details of identification numbers.
- Make a copy of your ear mark, brands or other identification marks and give a copy to each of your neighbours so that any stock that may stray can be easily identified. Encourage your neighbours to do the same. Store them in a convenient but safe location for easy reference. Staying stock between neighbouring properties is a common phenomenon but one which can lead to disputes between neighbours.
- Store tail tags in a safe location. You may be unaware of stock sold under your name with stolen tags.
- It is a good idea to notify your neighbours when you are mustering stock and selling stock and encourage them to do the same. That way, neighbours can be more suspicious if they see stock movements that they are not notified about.
- Most neighbours exchange stock that have strayed each time they muster. Some farmers have found that some neighbours keep stock that enter their property. Farmers say: *We have one-way fences on one side!* They suggest leading by example. Do the right thing yourself and you may encourage your neighbour to do the same.

- Let your trusted neighbours know when you are going away, ask them to watch over your property and keep an eye out for strange vehicles.

## **ILLEGAL TRESPASSERS AND SHOOTERS**

---

Shooters who are known to the owner, seek permission to shoot on a property and show respect for the infrastructure, crops and livestock are usually welcomed by a property owner, particularly if the numbers of feral animals or kangaroos on their property need to be controlled.

Property owners resent the presence of illegal trespassers and shooters on their property. There is a conflict with a perception by many urban dwellers that they have a right to enjoy nature irrespective if that land is privately owned. Illegal trespassers and shooters are seen as responsible for damage to crops, failure to shut gates, arson and other environmental damage, vandalism, and disturbance to stock. Farmers are held responsible for stock being on public roads and can be held liable if a vehicle hits an animal. There is also a suspicion that illegal trespassers and shooters of being responsible for other crimes on farms, such as the theft of fuel and diesel. Illegal shooters may also be responsible for the shooting of stock either by accident or by intention, and for having dogs that can attack livestock. The offenders may cut fences or chains or may simply run down fences with a vehicle.

### **What you can do**

- Place ‘No Trespassing’ and ‘Private Property’ signs at entry points from roads or highways, including the main entrance to your home, access roads to paddocks and areas along boundary fences. These signs notify intruders that they are trespassing.
- You can also contact *Neighbourhood* or *Rural Watch* to obtain ‘Neighbourhood Watch’ signs. These warning signs advertise that you are watchful of your property.
- Sturdy fences with gates located at property access points prevents trespassing.
- Keep all access gates chained and locked using good quality padlocks
- Drainage ditches will make it difficult for vehicles to enter your land.
- Encourage other farmers in your district to form a *Neighbourhood* or *Rural Watch* group in your district.
- Ask shooters who request access to your property for a reference from a farmer in the district.
- Use shooters from reputable Shooters’ Associations.
- Insist that shooters do not bring dogs onto your property.

- On long weekends, or at such times that you expect illegal trespassers or shooters on your property, choose that time to bait foxes for example. Put bait warning signs along your boundary fences. This will deter illegal shooters who usually travel with dogs.
- If you observe trespassers on your property, try to record as much information as you can to report to police. This would include the type, make and colour of the vehicle as well as the registration number. Follow the vehicle at a distance and note the trespassers' movements.
- If you meet strangers face to face, advise them they are on private property and ask them politely to leave. It is unwise to get into an altercation with these people as many carry knives and firearms and have vicious dogs. Rather, note all the personal identifying information about them to report later to police.
- Let the police know you are experiencing these problems. Other landholders may also be experiencing the same difficulties. The police can use several laws to detain offenders, such as firearm and vehicle offences, and cruelty to animals.