

Illegal Trespassers and Shooters

Feral pigs are a particular problem of late. They prey on lambs and some native animals; root up and feed on crops, pastures and the natural environment; and could play a role in spreading disease.

Shooters who are known to a property owner, seek permission to shoot on the property, and show respect for the infrastructure, crops and livestock may be welcomed by the property owner, particularly where the numbers of kangaroos or wild pigs need to be controlled. However, many farmers have experienced difficulty with a number of shooters trespassing illegally on their property looking to shoot wild pigs or poach feral goats.

Illegal trespassers and shooters

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 even if that land is privately owned. 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.

Illegal trespassers and shooters are seen as responsible for damage to crops, arson and other environmental damage, vandalism, failure to shut gates and disturbance to stock. The offenders may cut fences or chains or may simply run down fences with a vehicle. Farmers are responsible for keeping stock off public roads and can be held liable if a vehicle hits an animal. 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. There is also a suspicion that illegal trespassers and shooters are responsible for other crimes on farms, such as the theft of fuel and diesel.



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.
- Put up warning signs letting potential thieves and trespassers know that there are watch dogs, alarms on the premises and the property has identification marks.
- 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.
- Contact the police if your fences appear to be deliberately cut or tampered with.
- 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. Currently there are moves to tighten legislation and fines regarding trespass.

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/>

For more information, or if you wish to comment on the material in this leaflet, or if you have any other suggestions for crime prevention strategies on farm, please contact Elaine Barclay at:

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