

Identification of Farm Machinery, Tools and Equipment

Crime is no longer just an urban problem. There has been an alarming increase in the thefts of tools and equipment from farms, 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, headers, utilities or other farm vehicles. Items that are light and easy to carry and can be sold quickly are targeted. Many thefts go unreported.

Farmers pay for the loss of farm equipment due to theft 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 and model numbers for each piece of equipment and include a description of the type, make and brand of each piece and other distinguishable markings as well as the replacement value. 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. It is particularly important to 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. Let the police know about suspicious activities in your district. They are keen to receive information that 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 quickly identify your equipment if it 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.

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.
- Ideally use a welder to mark large items or farm equipment so that the mark can be recognised even if offenders attempt to grind it off.
- 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. Or you 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. Therefore, it is necessary to have a second mark as well as the 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.

What if I sell or trade my equipment?

Some equipment may change hands many times. It is suggested that you notify the new owner 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.

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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