

Protecting Your Farm and Securing Your Assets

Crime rates in rural areas are statistically lower when compared to urban areas; however, farms, farmers, and rural property owners are not immune to criminal activity. Trespass on farms and into barns, and theft of equipment, crops or animals are becoming more common on farming properties and are a serious matter. Protecting yourself, your animals, and your property is critical.

This resource is designed to help Ontario farmers to protect their farm assets and property. It covers potential areas of vulnerability and makes suggestions for adapting and improving on-farm security to reduce the risk of rural crime.

Prevention

There are some easy precautions you can take to ward off trespass and theft. Make sure to follow the tips below if you want to keep opportunistic thieves off your property and protect your business.

Signage

No Trespassing signs are the best way to indicate to outsiders that they are not welcome to roam your property without your consent. While signs won't necessarily keep intruders out, having them clearly visible will help build a case with police if intruders are found on your property. Display signs at every entrance to your property- even if there are entrances you do not use regularly.

Biosecurity signs indicate that biosecurity protocols are being used on the farm property, and that only authorized personnel should access the property.

Note: Biosecurity signs do not serve the same function as "No Trespassing" signs. If you have biosecurity signs up, be sure to also use "No Trespassing" signs.

Animal Protection Zone signs indicate that farm animals are kept or located on the premises. Signage is required in only certain circumstances* to prevent trespassing.

**Note: Please see AboutBill156.com for more information about where to use Animal Protection Zone signs*



Control Entry

Use a gate or chain to clearly establish the boundaries between your farm property and the road. If the property is off-limits at certain times of day, use the gate or chain to indicate so, and limit access.

Monitor visitors. Visitor logbooks, kept at main entry points, are another way to know who has been on your farm property.

Locks

It might be tempting to leave keys in unlocked vehicles, but locking up your equipment is worth the extra few seconds of effort.

Locked fences and gates can provide an added layer of security that might convince thieves to consider easier targets.

Invest in good quality locks- and use them. Ensure good-quality locks (with keys) are installed on all buildings and barns on your property. Remember, the cheaper the lock, the easier it is to pick or break.

Keypad locks are an option in some circumstances - just be sure to regularly change codes and limit the number of people who have access

Tip: Extreme cold temperature experiences across much of Canada in winter months can cause problems with breaking off keys inside locks. To avoid this, purchase lock de-icer and have it handy for a quick solution.



Keep de-icer handy
to help avoid
problems
associated with
cold and frozen
locks

Lighting

Thieves often use the darkness to their advantage, since it lessens the chance that they'll get caught. Farm owners should invest in security lighting for key areas of the farm property. Ensure good quality lighting is even across all areas, providing minimal opportunity for intruders to hide in shadows. Installing motion-sensor security lights and timer lights that turn on at sundown is an inexpensive but effective way to scare of would-be thieves.

Ensure building exteriors are well lit, particularly near entrances and exits, even on doors not in use. Motion sensors may help conserve electricity.

Surveillance System

Surveillance systems are one of the best ways you can protect your property from trespass and theft. They act as a deterrent against thieves looking for an easy target, or if someone does break in, it can help identify them later. Farm operators should install a surveillance system, including alarms on barns, which can send signals to home and/or create noise outside.

Security cameras in barns, on equipment, and around the property can provide another set of eyes to monitor the farm around the clock. The cost of indoor and outdoor internet-based camera systems has gone down significantly over the last several years with many options to help monitor your farm. Modern cameras record and store footage and allow you to receive alerts and see live feeds on your mobile or computer using cellular service or wi-fi (if available).

Well-placed cameras can help you watch over your most vulnerable areas, and home security apps enable you to view your property remotely. With both alarms and cameras, activate instant security alerts to be notified every time movement is detected in those areas.

GPS Tracking

Add GPS tracking onto your larger farm equipment so that you or law enforcement can easily locate and retrieve your items if stolen. There are several types of tracking devices available for agricultural vehicles, such as tractors and combines. GPS trackers allow you to track the location of your vehicle at any time using an app on your phone or computer. It can also alert you when your equipment has been stolen, so you can contact law enforcement immediately, even in the middle of the night.

Label Tools

Consider protecting large tools and small pieces of equipment by etching identification in an obscure area of the equipment.

What's the best place to etch identification? Somewhere obscure, where it would be difficult to sand off. Keep an inventory of equipment and tools, including models, makes, serial numbers, and replacement values.



Many local police departments have etchers available for rent

Be Aware

Be aware of people or vehicles coming and going. Report any suspicious activity to police. If something doesn't look right, take photos of any vehicles or people, keep detailed records of clothing, car, make, model, and record license plate numbers.

If you have livestock regularly check fields and barns and count your livestock. Keep recent and accurate records of your animals (photos, IDs, ear tag numbers, etc.).

Tip: Download a sample suspicious incident form [here](#).



Use an incident
report to record
details

Be Proactive

Get to know your local police officers well before you need them. Make a point of stopping into local detachments to have a conversation. Here are some tips:

- Be friendly, but to the point. Tell the police about your farm – where it is, what you do there, and who you live with.
- Be clear you are not asking for anything – just introducing yourself.
- Be professional. Express serious concern about the issues that could affect your farm or your family.
- Get their names and keep in regular contact.