



Securing your assets:

Protecting your farm against theft and trespassers

Farm theft and trespassing incidents are on the rise - and sadly, it's a trend that is expected to continue as people struggle with inflation and growing fears of economic recession. Crops and livestock are easy targets for thieves, along with equipment, fuel and other high value farm items that may not always be protected.

Although some thefts are crimes of opportunity, professional criminals are increasingly engaging in daytime thefts as they've come to learn that many people in rural areas are away from their properties during the day.

Here are some steps you can take to prevent or minimize your risk of theft:

Post clearly visible *No Trespassing* signs

No Trespassing signs are the best way to let people know they are not welcome to roam your property without your consent. Although signs won't necessarily keep intruders out, having them clearly visible at every entry to your property - even those you don't use regularly - will help build a case with police if you do have a theft or trespassing incident.

Control and monitor entry

If feasible, have one central entrance and exit on your property and use a gate or a chain to limit access and clearly establish the boundaries between your farm property and the road. Monitor that entry with a video surveillance system; this doesn't have to be cost prohibitive as there are now some reasonably priced camera systems on the market. Consider barricading entrance ways you don't use frequently with a large stump or other item that can only be moved with a tractor.

Be vigilant

Keep an eye out for people who look out of place and take photos of vehicles or people that may appear suspicious as many locations are scouted before they are targeted. Be vigilant about unknown tire tracks, discarded cigarettes, garbage, or alcohol containers on or near your property, as well as drones flying overhead that may be collecting information for theft or activism.

Activism can be difficult to trace as its very "underground" but monitoring websites and chats for current events can be helpful.

Make locking a habit

Buildings

Install good quality locks with keys on all buildings on your property. Remember, the cheaper the lock, the easier it is to pick or break. Keypad locks are not an ideal option because codes can be observed, and unauthorized individuals may gain entry.

Tip: Extreme cold temperatures 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.

Vehicles and fuel tanks

Don't leave your keys inside vehicles, tractors, ATVs or forklifts, and make sure they are locked when not in use, especially overnight. Fuel thefts are also on the rise, so securely lock any on-farm fuel tanks and storage.

Invest in lighting and alarms for your farm property

Install security lighting in key areas of your property and ensure they are as evenly lit as possible – this minimizes opportunities for intruders to hide in the shadows. Try to keep building exteriors well-lit, particularly doors and window and even those not in use. Just because you don't use them doesn't mean an intruder won't. As well:

- Lighting should be in the 10-20 lux range
- Motion sensors can help with energy conservation
- Maintain clear, free sightlines wherever possible

If practical, consider installing an alarm system in your barn or other farm buildings like equipment storages that will create noise outside and send you alert notifications.

Label tools and equipment

Protect large tools and small pieces of equipment by etching identification, such as your social insurance number, in an obscure area of the equipment where it would be difficult to sand off. Take photos with your cell phone of your items to help with identification.

Record the serial numbers of tools, equipment, and vehicles too. Not only is this important for insurance purposes if you are a victim of theft, but it's also the best way to ensure you get your stolen items back if they're ever found.

Tip: Photograph everything

If you have been a victim of theft, it's a best practice to obtain as much physical evidence where possible. Today, that can be done simply with your mobile phone: take pictures of anything that might seem relevant to authorities investigating the crime.