

**STOCK THEFT REPORT**

**NATIONAL RED MEAT PRODUCERS**

**CONGRESS 11 AND 12 SEPTEMBER 2018**

**Title: Livestock Theft a Global and South African Perspective**

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## Introduction

The significant contribution of agriculture to both global economies and rural communities is widely acknowledged (De Haan et al., 2001:xi; Bell & Pandey, 1997; Buttel, Larson, & Gillespie, 1990; Lasley, Leistritz, Lobao, & Meyer, 1995 quoted by Donnermeyer & Barclay, 2005:3; Ekuam, n.d.:4; Bunei et al., 2013:75; Bunei et al., 2016:117; Barclay, 2016:107; (Ibrahim et al., 2016:6). Agriculture is often associated with an idyllic rural environment in which crimes and other social problems are infrequent (Jones, 2012:8; Shucksmith, 2018:1, 163). However, agriculture is in fact vulnerable to crime, which can be devastating to both communities and the agricultural industry as a whole (McCall & Homel, 2017:286). Agricultural crime includes an array of property and environmental crimes committed within an agricultural setting (Barclay, 2016:107; McIntyre et al., 2017:158).

Communities tend to react to social problems such as crime (in this case livestock theft) in two main ways. The first involves individuals with a vested interest in the phenomenon promoting it to the general population – these people can be classed as “claim makers”, “moral entrepreneurs” and/or “political activists”. The second involves people studying the social problem and viewing its characteristics in terms of collective definitions rather than individual views and perceptions (Kappeler and Potter, 2017:l). This report is based on the latter approach, with the phenomenon being studied from an academic rather than an individual view. The focus will be on livestock theft in South Africa.

Brodsky (1997:265) makes the observation that “Life is a game with many rules but no referee. One learns how to play it more by watching it than by consulting any book. Small wonder, then, that so many play dirty, that so few win, that so many lose.” This report deal with the victims, those on the receiving end of the social evil of livestock theft over the period 2013 to 2018 in South Africa, and also with livestock theft globally, livestock theft prevention, and the extent of the crime.

In response to the crime of livestock theft, livestock producers in South Africa have tended to assume the role of victims, and comments such as “this is something that would only happen in Africa”, “only barbarians would do such a thing”, “we long for the good old days” and “it’s time that we take back our own” frequently feature in the news and social media. However, perhaps livestock producers should adopt a

different attitude. Brodsky (1997:268) comments, “of all the parts of the body, be most vigilant over the index finger, because it is blame-thirsty. A pointed finger is a victim's logo – the opposite of the V-sign and a synonym for surrender.” Additionally, he advises: “no matter how abominable your condition may be, try not to blame anything or anybody: history, the state, superiors, race, parents, and the phase of the moon.”

South Africa subscribes to the myth that the police are able to prevent crime, and so all crimes are simply blamed on the inefficiency of the criminal justice system. In light of this, and the warning sounded by Brodsky, this report will focus on livestock theft as a global crime, the extent and economic impact of livestock theft, and structures in South Africa designed to prevent livestock theft.

### **Livestock Theft as a Global Crime**

Contrary to belief and perception, livestock theft is not limited to a particular continent, country or area. It is a global phenomenon that manifest on various scales and dimensions across nations, having been committed since livestock herders first tamed the aurochs in 7000 BCE, and being the first crime to attract a restorative justice sentence mentioned in the Bible (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014:109; Niv, 2014; Morris, 2010:99).

Internationally, livestock theft is defined as robbery involving the theft of livestock (Anon, 2015:20). National statistics on crime refer to criminal offences as defined by each country's criminal law system (Anon, 2015:8). Different terminology is used in different parts of the world when referring to livestock theft, examples being stock theft (South Africa), cattle raiding (European countries and the USA), cattle rustling (Eastern and Northern Africa), lifting (India) and cattle duffing (Australia). Irrespective of the international classification of crime for statistical purposes as proposed by the United Nations Organised Crime and Drug Unit (UNODC), the South African criminal justice system does not provide for the different categories of the crime (Gibbons, 2015:57, 62).

### **Evidence of Livestock Theft Globally**

Of the abundant evidence of the crime in all parts of the world, a few examples are provided below:

- Cattle rustling is on the rise in various African countries, with the associated number of deaths among cattle rustlers, security forces and affected populations reaching troubling proportions (Guyene, 2013:55).
- Nigeria – Livestock theft is one of the major security threats affecting Nigeria today; it has become more serious over time, constituting a severe threat to lives and property, and hampering business activities (Bashir et al., 2018:35). Perception of the seriousness of the crime varies according to when and where it was committed (Masiola & Tomei, 2015; Anon, 2017:1). Hardly a week or month goes by in Nigeria without reports of cattle rustling (Bashir et al., 2018:34).
- Lesotho and Eastern Cape – The stock theft crisis in Southern Lesotho and the former Transkei region (now Eastern Cape) has been out of hand for a long time, and this area is the stock theft hotspot in Southern Africa (Kynoch & Ulicki, 2000:179; Clack, 2018; Tait & Van der Spuy, 2010:57).
- India – Over the past few decades, cattle rustling has become a controversial issue in India (Malnekoff, 2013:2). Cattle rustling, called “lifting” in India, is a growing scourge in New Delhi, as increasingly affluent Indians develop a taste for meat, even the flesh of cows, which are considered sacred in Hinduism (Harris, 2013).
- Madagascar – it was reported in 2012 that nearly 100 cattle thieves were killed in a wave of weekend attacks in southern areas of the Indian Ocean island plagued by rustling (‘100 killed in Madagascar cattle rustling unrest’, 2012).
- New Zealand – 500 cows were rustled from a farm in an unusual crime (500 cows rustled from New Zealand farm in unusual crime, 2016).
- Ireland – A farmer had his livelihood destroyed in 2015 after 75 cattle and 25 sheep were stolen from his lands near Kilbeggan (Cusack, 2015). Rising cattle thefts and livestock rustling threaten the traceability system on which the safety of Irish beef is founded (Lally, 2015).
- United States (USA) – It was reported in 2010 that in many states where people still make a living raising cattle, rustlers steal cattle, and that the situation was worsening (Kent, 2010).

- Cambodia – It was reported in 2004 that farmers were taking evasive action amid a wave of cattle rustling that authorities associated with a rise in beef prices and smuggling rackets across the borders in Vietnam and Thailand (Hunt, 2004).
- Venezuela – Along a vast, lawless border with Colombia, cattle rustlers steal and trade cows and smuggle them across the frontier, often in the dead of night (Long, 2018).
- Canada – In 2012 it was reported that 32 heifers were stolen from pasture in Goodfare (Anon, 2012).
- Britain – Livestock thefts have increased on British farms during the past few years, and rose again by 24% in 2013. According to figures from the insurance company NFU Mutual, which insures around three-quarters of the farmers in the UK, around 90,000 animals were stolen in 2013; most of these were sheep, although pigs and cattle have also been targeted (Saner, 2014).
- Northern Ireland – Almost 10,000 cattle have been stolen in the form 2013 to 2015 with the vast majority never seen again. Shocking figures reveal the extent of the cattle rustling crime wave facing the farming industry (McCullough, 2015).
- Wales – Sheep and cattle rustlers stole 100 animals from farms in Gwynedd, Conwy, and Denbighshire in North Wales. Police believed the thefts to have been carried out by highly organised criminal gangs (Hodgson, 2016).
- Texas (USA) – In 2013, livestock theft was reported as being on the rise (Buchele, 2013).
- Uruguay – Livestock farmers cited animal theft as one of the causes for the decrease in sheep breeding (Waquil et al., 2015:58).
- Costa Rica – In 2013 it was reported that authorities had broken up four gangs dedicated to cattle theft, a crime to have recently escalated at the time. However, Costa Rican authorities were not the only ones concerned about the practice, which at the time affected rural communities from northern Mexico to southern Argentina (Parkinson, 2013).

## **The Official Structures Available to Livestock Producers in South Africa for the Prevention of Livestock Theft**

South Africa adopted the principle of community policing in 1990, but due to the politics of the time it did not gain instant popularity. Community policing experienced numerous teething problems, and only became truly established in 1997, and then primarily in the urban areas, with the rural areas of South Africa not really benefiting. On 10 October 1998 at the Summit on Rural Safety and Security in Midrand, the late President Mandela was among the first to identify the rural areas as requiring special attention. Following this, various rural safety strategies were adopted by and among the various role-players in agriculture.

Livestock theft in South Africa was dealt with by means other than the normal community policing forums and so on. On 1 December 1995, all concerned role-players in the area of livestock theft attended a meeting in Pretoria hosted by the then Minister of Safety and Security, Sydney Mufamadi; the list of participants included the Minister of Justice, the late Dullah Omar, and the Minister of Correctional Services, Siphon Mzimela (Anon, 1999a). The outcome of the meeting was the establishment of the National Livestock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF), to be administered by the Red Meat Producers Organization (RPO). Subsequently a National Instruction, National Instruction 2/1999, was drafted and approved by the South African Police Service (SAPS) to describe the processes of stock theft investigations and the establishment of the NSTPF, Provincial Stock Theft Prevention Forums and Stock Theft Information Centres (Anon, 1999b:10–13).

The current annual plan of the SAPS (Anon, 2018a:12) states that

a joint Rural Safety Plan must be implemented, to address crime in the rural community in an integrated manner; rural safety meetings must be facilitated with the rural community to create awareness and enhance access, response and service delivery (CPF or Sector Forum may be used for this purpose); a capability must be available to respond to incidents in the rural community as well as to plan and execute joint crime prevention operations to address crime in the rural community, including stock theft (Visible Policing members, Tactical Response Team, POP Unit and/or Stock Theft Unit, in accordance with the

approved Standard Operational Procedure); and joint crime prevention programmes/projects and operations must be implemented in cooperation with all role players to address contributing factors influencing crime in general (Government, Non-Governmental Organisations and the rural community

Unfortunately, the annual plan creates confusion among established structures developed in accordance with National Instruction 2/1999 and causes tension in the rural community, as the general public, non-governmental organisations and organised agriculture are unsure as to which avenues to follow. On two occasions, namely a meeting at the AgriSA Centre for Excellence (Anon, 2018b) and a meeting with the Minister of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (Summit on Farm Killings, Murders and Stock Theft, 2018), this was taken up with SAPS structures and assurance was given that a National Instruction takes precedence over a strategic plan. Therefore, until the confusion between the structures within the SAPS is cleared up, National Instruction 2/1999 provides the guideline for dealing with livestock theft in the rural communities. The National Instruction provides for the following forums (Anon, 1999b:10):

- National Stock Theft Forum
- Provincial Stock Theft Forum

Provincial issues relating to stock theft are those that cannot be resolved at local level. The Provincial Stock Theft Forum is able to engage with the existing provincial agricultural structures (for example, the Security Committee) provided that the organisations or parties concerned<sup>2</sup> are represented, and the difficulties experienced with stock theft are receiving attention.

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- <sup>2</sup> (i) The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development  
(ii) The Department of Correctional Services  
(iii) The Department of International Relations and Cooperation  
(iv) The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
(v) The South African National Defence Force  
(vi) The South African Police Service  
(vii) Organised agriculture  
(viii) The National Prosecuting Authority/Directorate of Public Prosecutions  
(ix) The various commodity organisations concerned  
(x) Any institution that might be co-opted from time to time and



Over time, as STICs (stock theft information centres) have been established, the Commanders of stock theft units (STUs) and Chairpersons attend the provincial meetings in certain provinces, for instance North West and Western Cape. In the other provinces, the STIC representatives do not attend.

- Stock theft information centres (STICs)

The most important principle is as follows:

Stock Theft Information Centres must, in conjunction with the relevant Stock Theft Units, be established at the request of the livestock-owners in order to give the community [livestock-owners] the opportunity to make a positive contribution to effective policing of stock theft (Anon, 1999b:18)

At present, STICs are functional only in North West, and it is imperative that these structures be re-introduced for the benefit of producers.

The forums are a valuable tool allowing producers to determine their own destiny in the fight against livestock theft. A slogan commonly heard in South Africa is “United we stand, divided we fall”. Unfortunately, where there is emphasis on the second part of the slogan, the situation is one of divide and rule. By contrast, in provinces where the emphasis is on the first part of the slogan, there is greater success in reducing livestock theft. We need to acknowledge that no province exists in isolation, and that South Africa functions as a whole.

#### [The extent of livestock theft in South Africa in 2018](#)

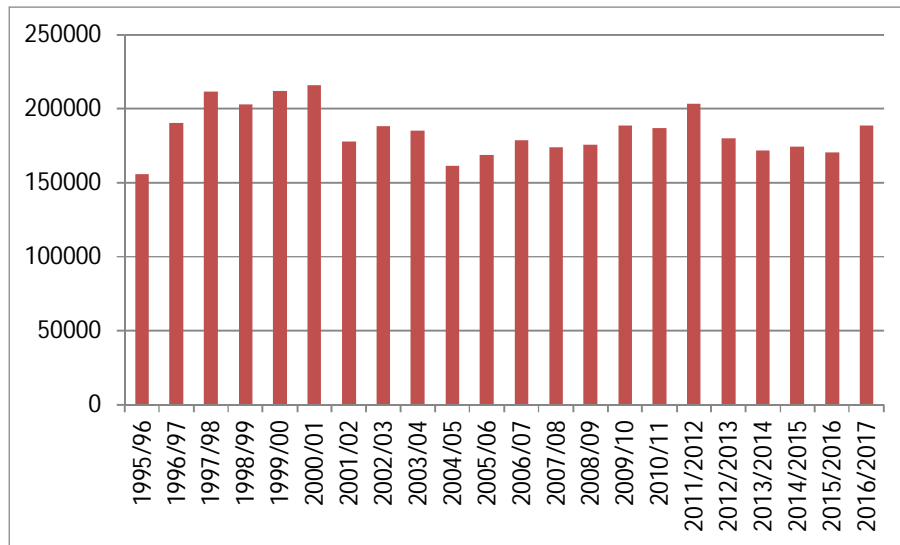
Before the extent of livestock theft is discussed, it must nevertheless be noted that the crime statistics for the period 2017/2018 have not been released. For the number of cases in figure 1, reference is made to the end of the 2016/17 statistical year for crimes as published by the SAPS. For the number of animals stolen, the detection rates and so on, the figures for the period 2017/18 were made available at a workshop arranged by the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (Summit on Farm Killings, Murders and Stock Theft, 2018).

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(xi) Any other person in an advisory capacity that can advise the Forum on related matters

### **Number of cases reported**

In figure 1 below, all the livestock theft cases as per the definition in the Stock Theft Act 57 of 1959 have been included, and the figures are not limited to the livestock dealt with in this paper, as the livestock theft cases reported to the SAPS do not specify the type of livestock stolen. Determining the extent of livestock theft purely on the basis of the number of cases reported is problematic, as there are other variables that also need to be taken into account. In certain regions more poultry, donkeys and horses are stolen, with these being defined as livestock by the National Livestock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF).



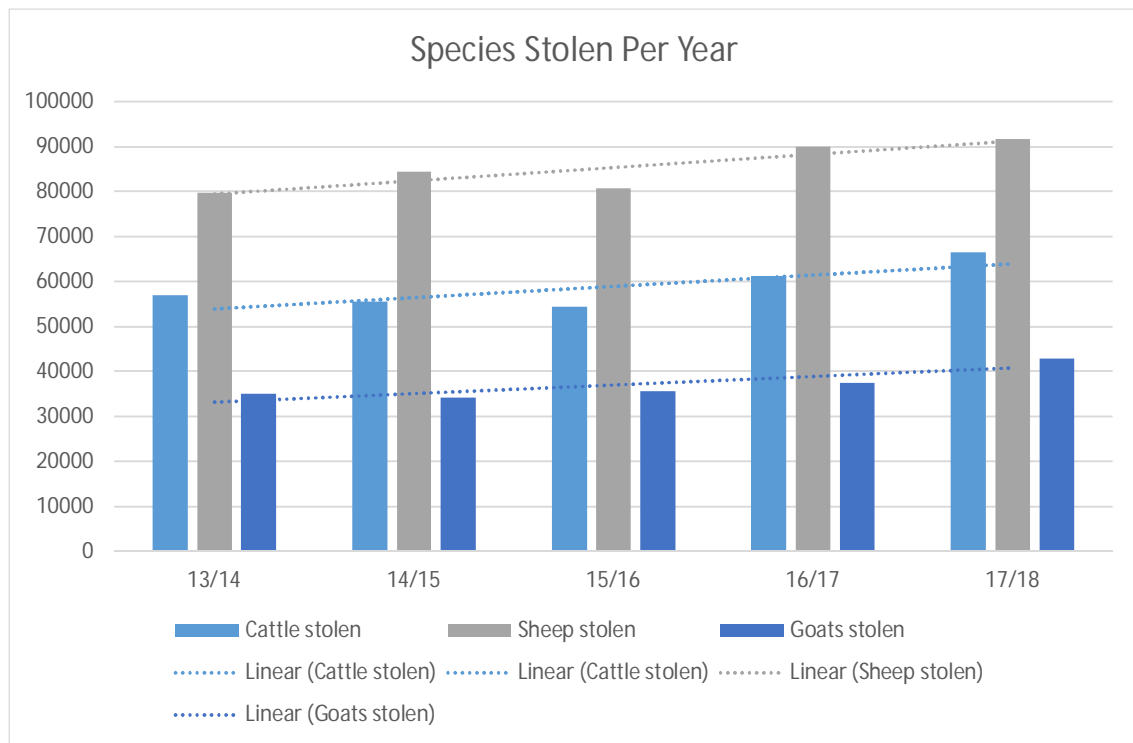
**Figure 1: Number of reported livestock theft cases**

The trend line in figure 1 is interesting, as a clear pattern since 1995 can be traced. There is a consistent rise for 6 to 7 years, followed by a decrease for 5 years, after which the cycle is repeated. 2016/17 marked the turning point, considering the increase in the number of animals stolen as reflected in figure 2. If this conclusion is true, there will be a rise in the number of cases reported over the next few years.

**Number of livestock theft cases, 2017/2018**

The number of reported livestock theft cases is not the only variable to consider in determining the extent of livestock theft, as the modus operandi of the offenders differs depending on whether they are stealing for survival, *potslagting*, or out of greed, as the latter is more organised. Depending on the modus operandi, the number of animals stolen per case ranges from one to several hundred. The case of *Van der Vyver v S (A161/2011) [2012] ZAFSHC 121 (21 June 2012)* is a typical example, with the accused on trial for 57 different livestock theft cases ranging from 1 to 519 head of cattle. The number of livestock units stolen is therefore an important variable to consider in determining the extent of livestock theft.

Figure 2 shows the number of livestock stolen by year. These figures, unlike those in figure 1, relate only to cattle, sheep and goats; the other animals, as per the legal definition, are excluded.

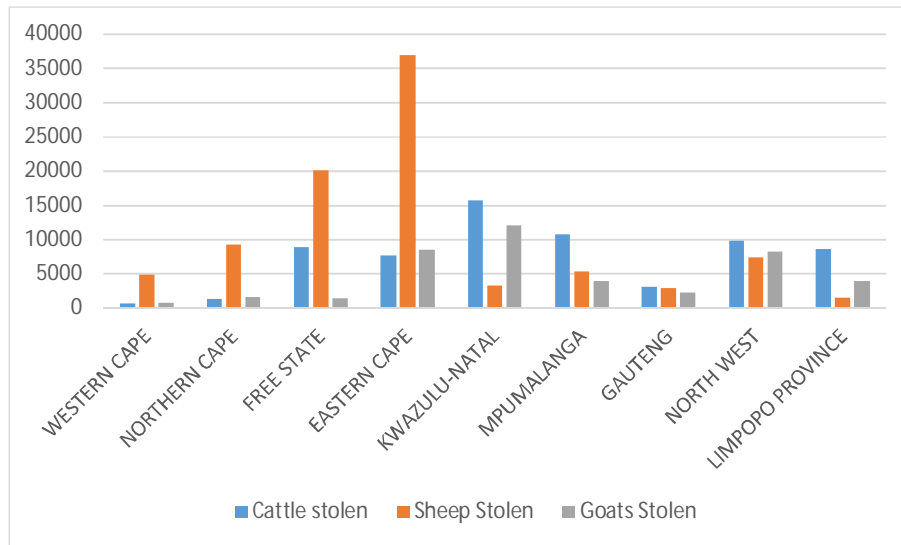


**Figure 2: Livestock stolen over the period 2013 to 2018**

It is apparent from figure 2 that there has been a gradual rise in the number of livestock units stolen, irrespective of the type of animal, since 2013/14, reaching the unacceptably high figures. If we calculate the number of livestock units stolen in the country per day, the true horror of the situation becomes evident. The figures are as follows:

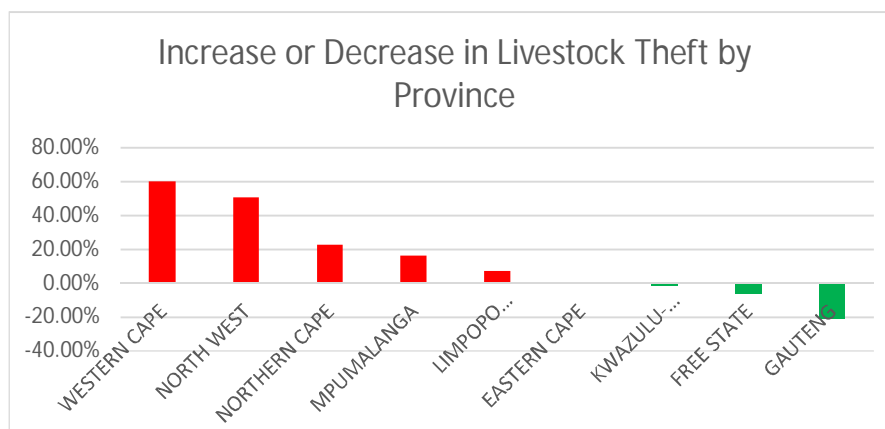
- Cattle: 178 stolen per day (365 days of the year)
- Sheep: 249 stolen per day (365 days per year)
- Goats: 115 stolen per day (365 days per year)

South Africa therefore loses one economic farming unit per day. In cases where people farm with limited numbers of livestock, their livelihood is simply destroyed.



**Figure 3: Number of livestock units stolen by province, 2017/18**

Figure 3 shows the number of livestock units stolen by province. Outlier provinces for cattle are KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, where more than 10 000 head were stolen. Outlier provinces for sheep are Eastern Cape and the Free State, where more than 20 000 per year were stolen. Outlier provinces for goats are Northern Cape and North West, where more than 8 000 per year were stolen. In conclusion, no single province dominates in terms of all the different types of livestock, and this is attributed to the number of people and types of animal in a specific province. The figures in figure 3, although informative, are misleading: the Western Cape appears not to be susceptible to livestock theft, whereas overall it was the province with the greatest increase in livestock theft (60%) in 2017/18. See figure 4.



#### **Figure 4: Increase or decrease in livestock theft by province**

From figure 4 it is evident that the provinces with the greatest increase in the number of animal stolen are the Western Cape and North West. Clarity is necessary, however, as this is once again misleading. The Western Cape is the only province in the country with unprecedented increase in the number in all animals cattle 196%, sheep 49,8% and goats 67%. In North West there was an unprecedented rise in the number of goats stolen, and this contributed to an increase of 1296%. In North West the increase relates only to goats. Mpumalanga experienced a 30.2% increase in the number of cattle stolen. The main contributor in the Northern Cape was a 27% increase in the number of sheep stolen. The provinces with notable decreases were the Free State and Gauteng.

#### **Detection rate**

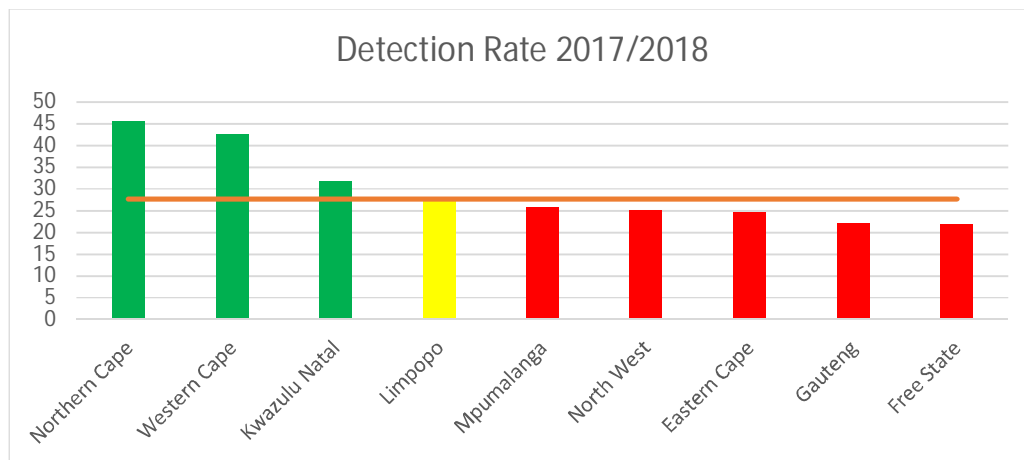
Budhram and Geldenhuys (2017:7) assert that assessing the detection rate is a losing battle due to the methodology adopted by the SAPS. The detection rate provides an indication of successful investigations in terms of the SAPS's active investigative workload, consisting of new crimes reported to the SAPS and older cases not finalised and therefore carried over from previous financial years. The detection rate measures the ability of the SAPS to solve crimes during investigation (Budhram and Geldenhuys, 2017:9). According to the SAPS, a successful investigation result comprises:

- the positive identification, arrest and charging of a perpetrator
- investigations withdrawn by the complainant before the perpetrator is charged
- investigations closed as unfounded (Anon, 2018a:80).

The rationale for including unfounded cases and cases withdrawn out of court in the detection rate is not clear (Budhram & Geldenhuys, 2017:9), and for the purposes of this report it will not be examined further.

The determination of a detection rate for property-related crimes is a new performance indicator in the SAPS Annual Performance Plan (Anon, 2018a:45). Before exploring the detection rates of livestock theft in the country and provinces it

is necessary to mention that livestock theft is a property crime. From the Annual Performance Plan, serious crimes such as murder, rape and robbery clearly have a high detection rate target of 65% and above, whereas property crimes have a much lower detection rate target of 14% in 2018, increasing to 14.54% in 2022. As for livestock theft as a property crime, the bar is set much higher at 27.7% for 2018 (Summit on Farm Killings, Murders and Stock Theft, 2018).

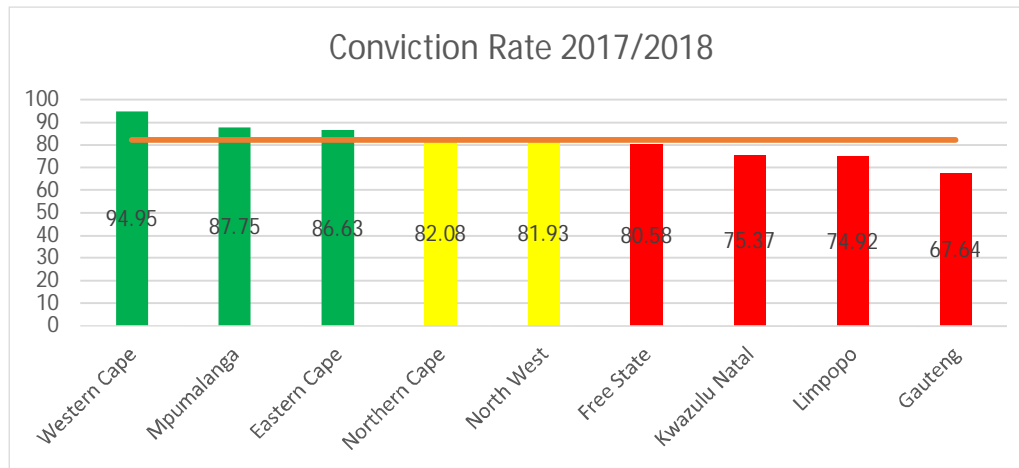


**Figure 5: Detection rate per province, 2017/2018**

The line in figure 5 is the national performance indicator for livestock theft detection, with Northern Cape, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal far ahead and the rest trailing behind, with Gauteng and Free State in last position.

### Conviction rate

Correlating with the detection rate, various conviction rate targets are set in the Annual Performance Plan of the SAPS. These also differ according to crime category; in the case of property crimes the target is 88% in 2018, increasing to 89.23% in 2022. For livestock theft the bar is set much lower than the national target for property crimes at 80.89%.



**Figure 6: Conviction rate by province, 2017/2018**

The line in figure 6 represents the current barometer of 80.89% for livestock theft. Again we have different provinces above the target, with Western Cape, Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape above the average and only Western Cape well above the national threshold. Once again, Gauteng is dismally far below the rest.

### Comparative Performance Indicators

**Table 1: Comparative performance indicators**

	Western Cape	Northern Cape	Free State	Eastern Cape	Kwazulu Natal	Mpumalanga	Gauteng	North West	Limpopo
Recovery rate Cattle	11,13%	32,71%	32,50%	26,90%	43,86%	26,72%	31,73%	26,11%	22,70%
Recovery rate Sheep	19,35%	25,37%	22,56%	15,03%	32,50%	16,74%	17,51%	19,48%	17,63%
Recovery Rate Goats	18,76%	67,61%	15,37%	19,80%	31,53%	13,47%	16,57%	20,60%	15,87%
	16,41%	41,90%	23,48%	20,58%	35,96%	18,98%	21,94%	22,06%	18,74%
Increase/Decrease Cattle Stolen	196,92%	37,84%	-14,13%	14,83%	6,18%	30,13%	1,30%	-1,29%	23,18%
Increase/Decrease Sheep Stolen	49,36%	27,02%	-0,78%	-5,10%	-12,12%	14,57%	-28,42%	16,70%	2,24%
Increase Decrease Goats Stolen	67,71%	-3,96%	-28,07%	15,64%	-7,16%	-8,54%	-32,09%	1259,64%	-15,58%
Increase/A=Decres All Livestock	104,66%	20,30%	-14,33%	8,45%	-4,37%	12,05%	-19,74%	425,01%	3,28%
Detection Rate	42,52%	45,63%	22,01%	24,61%	31,73%	25,85%	22,04%	25,07%	27,17%
Conviction rate	94,95%	82,08%	80,58%	86,63%	75,37%	87,75%	67,64%	81,93%	74,92%
	68,74%	63,86%	51,30%	55,62%	53,55%	56,80%	44,84%	53,50%	51,05%

Table 1 shows the variables that could be utilised to determine the success or failure of provincial stock theft units. It is suggested that the Provincial Stock Theft Forum acquaint themselves with the information and attempt to set new goals for the next year. Table 1 further reveals that there was a decrease in all categories of livestock theft in two provinces, Free State and Gauteng. Although not researched, this has contributed to the good working relationships between the role-players in the



two provinces. An Interprovincial Stock Theft Prevention Forum is making a significant impact.

### The Economic Impact of Livestock Theft

In Table 2, the number of animals stolen and recovered and loss are quantified in monetary terms to indicate the economic impact of stock theft on the agricultural community. The monetary values in Table 2 are obtained by adding the figures in Table 3 to obtain the total values of all the livestock affected.

**Table 2: Value of all livestock stolen and recovered, and the resulting financial loss**

	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
Stolen	R 788 536 200	R 819 045 200	R 877 381 700	R 1 058 806 200	R 1 222 352 592
Recovered	R 277 475 800	R 301 452 200	R 309 211 200	R 324 285 400	R 344 104 296
Loss	R 511 060 400	R 517 593 000	R 568 170 500	R734 520 800	R 878 248 296

Table 2 should sound a warning, as the monetary value of stolen animals has increased by R500 million over the past 5 years.

Table 3 sets out the monetary value of the different types of livestock stolen. It is obvious that the highest losses relate to cattle, due mainly to their high value, while sheep – number wise – are more susceptible to theft, although in financial terms they represent a smaller loss.

**Table 3: Value of livestock stolen and recovered, and the resulting financial loss per type of animal**

		2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
Cattle	Stolen	R 598 017 000	R 610 467 000	R 653 148 000	R 796 328 000	R 925 348 840
	Recovered	R 231 735 000	R 247 632 000	R 251 676 000	R 263 965 000	R 285 627 940
	Loss	R 366 282 000	R 362 835 000	R 401 472 000	R 532 363 000	R 639 720 900
Sheep	Stolen	R 127 540 800	R 143 541 200	R 153 183 700	R 180 086 000	R 196 116 020
	Recovered	R 26 660 800	R 35 523 200	R 38 243 200	R 36 006 000	R 37 422 180
	Loss	R 100 880 000	R 108 018 000	R 114 940 500	R 144 080 000	R 158 693 840
Goats	Stolen	R 62 978 400	R 65 037 000	R 71 050 000	R 82 392 200	R 100 887 732
	Recovered	R 19 080 000	R 18 297 000	R 19 292 000	R 24 314 400	R 21 054 176
	Loss	R 43 898 400	R 46 740 000	R 51 758 000	R 58 077 800	R 79 833 556

## Conclusion

Agriculture is an extremely important economic contributor to the social well-being of South Africa. Livestock theft is not just an African problem, but a global one. Producers need to take control of their own destiny in relation to livestock theft, as one of the biggest myths in the criminal justice system is that the police are able to prevent crime. In this regard the necessary livestock theft prevention forums established should be judiciously utilised to protect the agricultural sector in general and red meat producers in particular.

The phenomenon of livestock theft clearly cannot be generalised, as it differs in extent between regions and provinces. Nevertheless, it is the role and responsibility of the National Livestock Theft Prevention Forum to inform the general public of its efforts to reduce the scourge of livestock theft.

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