

THE EXTENT OF STOCK THEFT IN SOUTH AFRICA**Willie Clack¹****ABSTRACT**

Agriculture is one of the cornerstones in any country's economy. Therefore, the different crimes committed within the rural agricultural communities need to be researched as they impact on the economy and food security of the country. The importance of crimes committed in the rural areas of South Africa is neglected by researchers in the field of humanities and related research areas. In South Africa, livestock theft is the only crime committed on farms which is indicated separately within the National Crime Statistics. Irrespective, the crime is neglected by researchers and the extent of the crime is not comprehended within the criminal justice system or the academia This article will attempt to explore the extent of stock theft in South Africa by focusing on the number of cases reported, livestock stolen and the differences in theft of specific livestock species and the economic impact of crime on agriculture. The article will not deal with any crime theories related to the crime as it is regarded as a separate research topic. It is believed that by elevating the extent of stock theft to a platform where academics studying criminal justice in South Africa take cognisance of the crime, that the social impact on all communities, rural or urban, could then become a research topic.

Keywords: *Agriculture, farm crimes, food security, economic, livestock, rural areas, stock theft*

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture remains the largest segment of the economy in most rural communities of both developed and developing countries (Bell & Pandey, 1997; Buttel, Larson, & Gillespie, 1990; Lasley, Leistritz, Lobao, & Meyer, 1995) quoted by Donnermeyer and Barclay, 2005: 3). South Africa is no exception as 82.3 per cent of the land is utilised for farming and 68.6 per cent of the total land is grazing land and therefore more suitable for extensive livestock farming, be it beef cattle, sheep, goats or game, than crop production. Agriculture is also the economic enterprise that does not only provide for the food security of the nation or world, but also contributes to improving household food security and addressing poverty alleviation in small-scale communal farming (Red Meat Research Development Planning Committee (RMRDT), 2012: 6).

The figures of land use and requirements indicate the significance of agriculture as a whole but also of livestock in society. In South Africa, crime in the rural agricultural community is high – if compared to the extent of the urban community – and ranges from execution-style murders, attempted murder, rape, attacks aimed at causing grievous bodily harm, humiliation, robbery, armed robbery, vehicle hijacking, damage to property, arson and mutilation of animals, livestock theft, etc. (Schutte, 2004: 75–79). The South African Police Service (SAPS) is responsible for the administration and publication of crime statistics. Unfortunately, of all these possible crimes committed in the agricultural community, only theft of stock is recorded as a separate crime on farms. All other crimes committed on farms are included in the overall statistics of crimes which do not distinguish between crimes committed in rural and urban areas.

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Statistics South Africa specifies livestock theft as a percentage of the monetary value of all losses on farms for the period 2008-2010. According to these statistics, livestock theft over the period contributed on average towards 12.1 per cent of all the losses on farms in South Africa (Statistics South Africa (SSS) 2012: 13), (SSS, 2011: 9).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

When embarking on a literature review to develop an idea of the impact of crime on agricultural farms in South Africa, it becomes evident that there is a serious inadequacy of research on the topic. The inadequacy of research on farms is not limited to South Africa and is also found in other literature reviews addressing stock theft and farm crimes internationally. Internationally, in the fields of criminology, penology and the whole criminal justice system, there is a bias towards research in urban areas and therefore a total neglect of rural areas and the crimes on farms (Jones, 2010: 36, Swanson et al. 2000 in Smith, 2010: 373). The inadequacy and bias is conspicuous as there is a difference between rural and urban crimes (Mears, Scott & Bhati, 2007: 1, Barclay & Donnermeyer, 2001: 3). The neglect of research on farms is the result of a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons may be that a) academics in the human sciences rather attempt to do research in urban areas b) due to the number of people in rural areas, researchers may struggle to find large enough populations for quantitative research c) the extent and vastness of the rural areas make research extremely expensive and d) farming communities resist to participating in research due to a lack of trust in researchers to keep information privileged and confidential and a natural resistance to providing any personal information.

In South Africa during the 1990s and early 2000s, many researchers did research on the topic of farm attacks and there was also a tendency to focus on other rural crimes such as the illegal wildlife trade. Presently, research that addresses rhinoceros poaching is popular and receives the attention of the public on a daily or weekly basis through reporting by the media. The reporting is of such an extent that the rhinoceros was awarded the newsmaker of the year award in 2013 by the National Press Club (Slabbert, 2013: 1). Rhinoceros poaching is a highly salient crime in the public mind, due to the emotional impact. On the contrary, livestock theft is neglected. Kahneman (2011: 23) is of the opinion that frequently mentioned topics in the media populate the mind and other topics in this case livestock theft, slip away from awareness and become totally forgotten. This phenomenon of total neglect is not limited to the general public but is also the case within the academia and agricultural community as a whole. On 3 August 2013, Gerhard Schutte,¹ in a telephone conversation with the author, mentioned “we never thought of livestock theft as a priority crime that could be researched from a criminal justice point of view”.

In South Africa, livestock theft is declared a priority crime in the National Rural Safety Strategy of SAPS. At the launch, then national police commissioner Bheki Cele said “stock theft had been prioritised because rural safety concerns are just as important and devastating as crime in the country’s urban centers” (Coleman, 2011: 1). This statement by the former National Commissioner is in conflict with the findings in researching the topic.

In 2012, the Red Meat Industry Forum (RMIF) mentioned in a media statement that livestock theft in South Africa is completely out of control and the impact threatens the sustainability of livestock production in most of the provinces in South Africa (Hyslop 2012). Despite these claims, the extent of livestock theft is not really understood and therefore sometimes becomes futile semantic rhetoric amongst politicians, people in organised agriculture and journalists.

An array of examples of this rhetoric is found in popular journals such as *Farmers Weekly* (Mashala 2012) and *Landbouweekblad* (Stoltz 2012). This rhetoric, resorting to extremes, stresses the need that the correct picture must be portrayed not only to the agricultural community but also to the community at large.

The impact of livestock theft is mainly economic but the emotional impact on the victims cannot be ignored. Economically, the crime affects the business enterprise of each and every livestock producer, irrespective of whether the producer is a commercial farmer or small-scale farmer, and is the largest obstacle in sustainable livestock production and food security (Khoabane & Black, 2009: 3, Gouws 2012). The small-scale agriculturalists are even more severely affected by livestock theft than commercial farmers, based on the economies of scale (SAPS, 2011a: 8). It is indisputable that if you own 10 cattle and 1 is stolen you lose 10 per cent of your herd, whilst if you have a 100 cattle and 1 is stolen you lose 1 per cent of the herd. It is not only the economies of scale that need to be taken into account, but also the future economic impact on herd expansions and food security. Mashala (2012) provides a thorough example of this economic effect. This article will not discriminate between the difference in the effect of the crime on communal and commercial farmers as it is impossible because statistics are not provided to determine the difference between the two distinctions.

Evaluating the claims that livestock theft is rampant and out of hand in South Africa requires that a number of variables be investigated in order to confirm or deny the hypothesis. Variables that need to be considered are the extent of livestock crime compared to other crimes; number of livestock stolen, with the emphasis on the three main categories: cattle, sheep and goats; the number of cattle stolen and found and the number of livestock theft cases reported.

Aim of the article

This article aims is to create awareness of a neglected crime – livestock theft – in South Africa within the media and academia. The extent of stock theft is addressed by focusing on the number of cases reported, livestock stolen and the differences amongst the species and its economic impact. Aspects that contribute to livestock theft as a crime, sentencing and crime theories, for example social control theory, routine activity theory or possibly opportunity theories, are not addressed in this article.

Definition of livestock

Livestock, according to the Stock Theft Act No 57 of 1959 (Department of Justice, South Africa 1959: 2), refers to a wide range and variety of species. The Stock Theft Act defines livestock as “any horse, mule, ass, bull, cow, ox, heifer, calf, sheep, goat, pig, poultry, domesticated ostrich, domesticated game or the carcase or portion of the carcase of any such stock”.

The definition includes a wide variety of livestock but not all have a major impact on the extent of livestock theft. Over the years, and as time progressed the theft of cattle, sheep and goats contribute to approximately 89 per cent of all livestock theft in South Africa. The other animals included in the definition – horse, mule, ass, pig, poultry, domesticated ostrich, domesticated game or the carcase or portion of the carcase of any such stock – only contribute 11 per cent of livestock theft on average. If you distinguish between the animals in the latter categories it is evident that their numbers are not significant.

The RMIF, Red Meat Producers' Organisation (RPO), National Stock Theft Forum (NSTF), other role players and the content of this article limit the extent of livestock theft to three species, namely: cattle, sheep and goats.¹

OVERVIEW OF LIVESTOCK THEFT

The extent of livestock theft when compared to all other serious crimes in South Africa

Table 1: Livestock theft in relation to other crimes in South Africa

Year	Number of serious crimes	Livestock theft cases	Livestock theft cases as a percentage of all serious crimes
2009/2010	2 121 887	32 380	1.52%
2010/2011	2 071 487	30 144	1.45%
2011/2012	2 016 316	30 949	1.53%

(SAPS, 2011a: 3; SAPS, 2012: 79)

Livestock theft during the period of the three years addressed in Table 1 contributed 1.5 per cent of all serious crimes in South Africa. When comparing reported livestock theft cases to other serious crimes it may be argued that livestock theft is not significant. Claiming that livestock theft is not significant based on simply numbers can have serious implications, as the economic impact and use of livestock in rural areas are not assessed. Livestock serves a multipurpose within communal and commercial systems of farming. Although the systems are comparable, the uses and economic impact of livestock vary considerably across countries and across regions in a country (Shackleton, Shackleton, Netshiluvhi & Mathabela., 2005: 127, Jarvis, 1988: 59).

Livestock is the economic backbone within the rural areas and used for milk, manure for land, meat, has a saving value and, if sold, and pays food school fees, university fees, etc. When livestock is stolen, the economic activity and harmonious lifestyle of a household or family is severely stressed in both communal and commercial settings (Khoabane & Black 2009, p. 2, Shackleton et al., 2005: 127, Cousins, 1996: 171–172). Commercially livestock theft has a direct bearing on future economic agricultural activities and in the end threatens food security of the entire South African population (Anon, 2012: 1). Research regarding the effect of livestock theft on commercial farmers is, however, non-existing in South Africa.

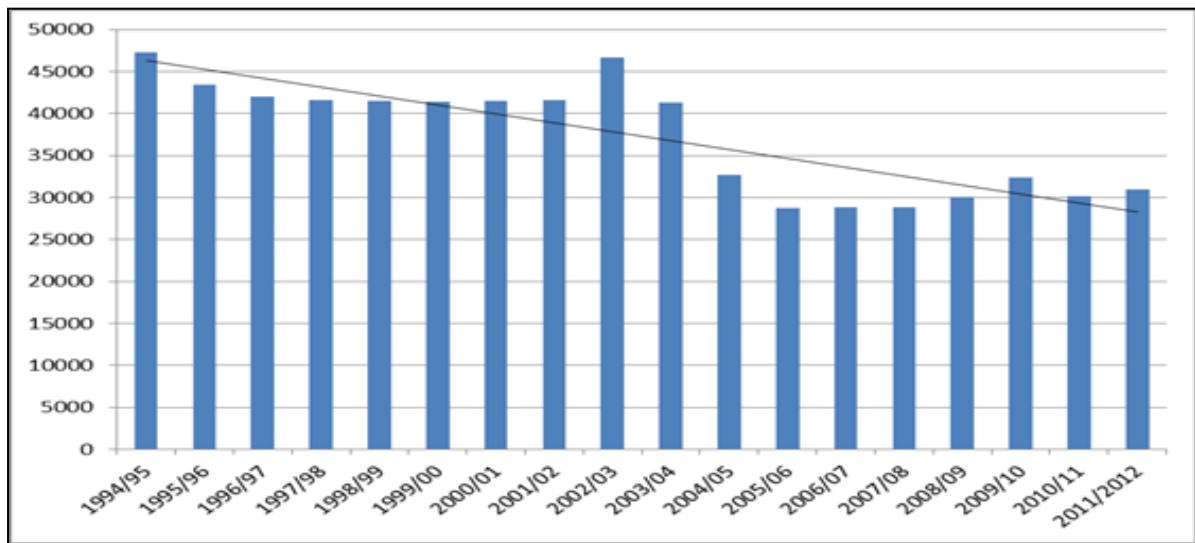
Where previously people might have stolen predominantly for the pot “*potslagting*”,³ lately there are groups that have latched onto stock theft as a way of enriching themselves (Goede, 2012: 1, Gouws 2012, Anon, 2008a: 11, Anon, 2008b).

Livestock theft cases reported per year

In Figure 1 below, all the livestock theft cases as per definition in the Stock theft Act No 57 of 1959 is included and the numbers are not limited to those livestock addressed in this article. The reason being that the number of livestock theft cases reported to the SAPS does not distinguish the type of livestock stolen. In determining the extent of livestock theft by only taking into account the number of cases reported is problematic as there are other variables that also need to be taken into account. This predicament of only taking reported livestock theft cases into account is highlighted by the fact that Ventersdorp in the North West Province is currently the police station with the most reported livestock cases in the country. According to Oosthuizen (2012), this is due to that fact that the theft of poultry is

abundant in the Ventersdorp district and 80 per cent of the reported cases in this area are poultry-related.

Figure 1: Number of reported livestock cases⁴



The data provided in Figure 1 establishes a decline in the number of cases reported since 1994/95. The decline in the number of livestock theft cases follows a similar pattern as most other serious crimes in South Africa. However, in June 1995 the NSTF was established by government departments, organisations and persons affected by the crime (Anon, 1995:1). The establishment, involvement and active role the NSTF played in reducing livestock theft has not been researched, but the decline may be attributed to the joint efforts of the role players involved. In Figure 1, the most number of cases, 47 287, was reported in 1994/95 and the least number of cases, 28 742, was reported in 2005/06. During the period 1994/95 to 2003/04 the number of cases reported on average was 42 832 per year. Since 2004/05, the number of cases reported declined drastically and the average dropped by 29.2 per cent to 30 317 and stabilised around approximately 30 000 cases per year. Although the linear line in Figure 1 over the whole period follows a decline, it is obvious that since 2008 there is a constant increase in the number of livestock theft cases. The number of cases reported cannot be viewed in isolation as not all crimes are reported and the factor of non-reporting needs to be addressed.

Non-reporting of cases

In South Africa, it is a trait that a large number of economic crimes are never reported to the authorities and livestock theft is not an exception. Statistics South Africa reported in 2011 that that 36.3 per cent of stock theft cases was not reported by the victims and in 2012 this number rose to 40.1 per cent (Statistics South Africa, 2011: 11, Statistics South Africa, 2012: 14).

The non-reporting of stock theft cases by livestock owners can be attributed to various reasons. Firstly, 31.8 per cent of livestock theft cases are not reported due to a lack to trust in the capability of the SAPS to recover the stolen stock and or to prosecute the case successfully. This perception of livestock owners can be understood as only 4 per cent of victims are informed that an arrest has been made or that stolen livestock has been recovered. Secondly, 30.2 per cent of livestock owners' believe that it is not an important enough crime to report to the authorities. This may be true of small livestock such as chickens, but not of

larger livestock with a high monetary value and which are addressed in this article. Thirdly, 11.8 per cent of the victims of livestock theft use other methods to resolve the crimes, such as to report it to local authorities or neighbourhood watch. In poorer rural communities, this has a high prevalence as there is still a high sense of community justice. Fourthly, in 8.8 per cent of the cases the SAPS was not available or reachable (Singh, 2005: 43; Burton, Du Plessis, Leggett, Louw, Mistry & Van Vuuren, 2004: 4; Statistics South Africa, 2012: 53).

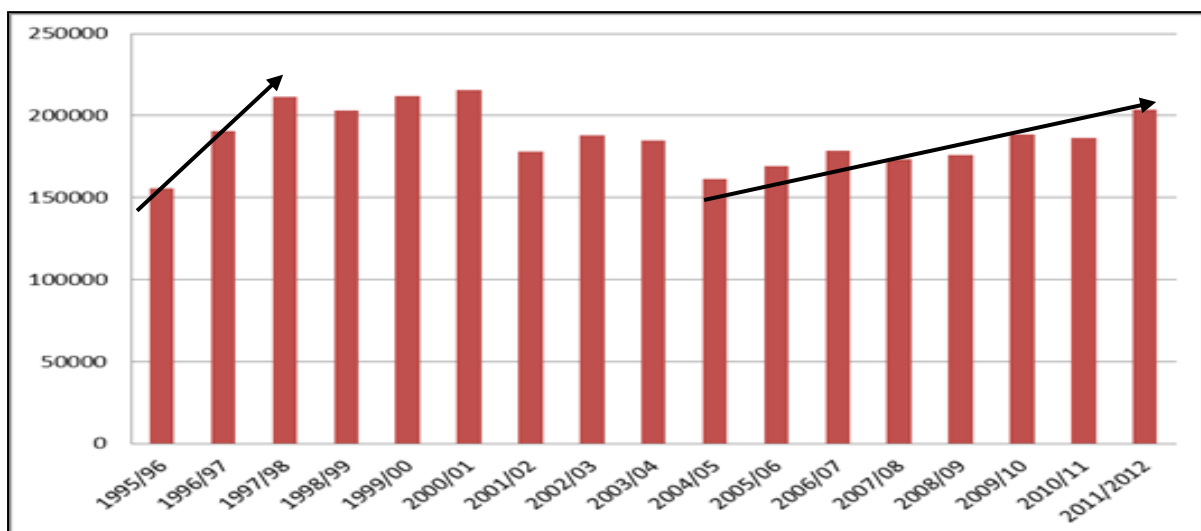
Other reasons why commercial farmers do not report livestock theft cases is firstly due to the fact that livestock in South Africa, with the exception of some stud breeders, is not insured. Insurance companies either do not provide this type of insurance or if they do provide it, it is very expensive. The insurance of livestock is not within the scope of this article, however, to understand the extent of the number of livestock theft cases compared to other property-related crimes, it must be noted. In the case of most other property-related crimes, the commodity is insured and in order for the victim to press a claim for damages the case must be reported to the SAPS, which is not the case with livestock theft that is not insured. Secondly, there is the fear of fines being imposed on victims of livestock theft, due to the fact that animals have not been marked in accordance with the requirements of section 7 of the Animal Identification Act No 6 of 2002 (Department of Agriculture, 2008: 2).⁵ Livestock owners are also aware of the fact that to reclaim unidentified livestock is problematic.

Number of livestock stolen per year

The number of reported stolen livestock cases is not the only variable to consider to determine the extent of livestock theft as the modus operandi of the offenders normally differ between those stealing for survival (*"potslagting"* [slaughtering for the pot]) and those for greed, which is of a more organised nature. The modus operandi results in the number of animals stolen per case differing 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 where the accused was on trial for 57 different livestock theft cases ranging from 1 to 519 head of cattle. The number of livestock stolen is therefore an important variable to consider in determining the extent of livestock theft.

Figure 2 shows the extent of the number of livestock stolen per year. These numbers, contrary to those in Figure 1, only deals with cattle, sheep and goats; the other animals as per the legal definition are excluded.

Figure 2: Number of livestock stolen



In Figure 1, the number of livestock cases reported consistently declined since 1994. In contrast, the numbers of livestock stolen as shown in Figure 2 increased dramatically for the period 1995/96 to 1997/98. Thereafter it stabilised and started to decline to a low in 2004/05. The sharp increase from 1995/96 to 1997/98 is attributed to the incorporation of the old Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei states into the new South Africa in 1994 and the fact that their statistics became part of a whole in the new South Africa (SAPS, 2000: 6).

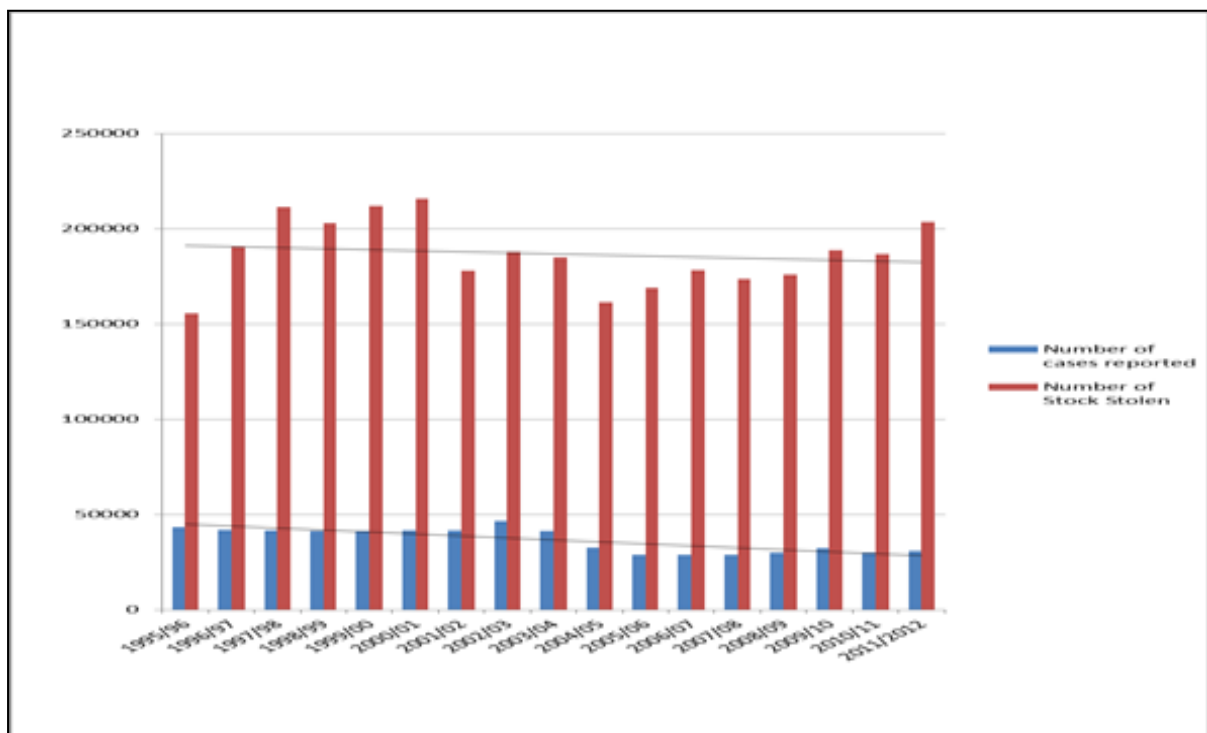
From Figure 2 it is evident that since 2004/05 there has been a constant increase in the number of livestock stolen with an unprecedented sharp increase in 2011/12. The reason for the increase is not known as there is a variety of variables that may play a role, such as an improvement in the number of cases reported, the modus operandi of the offenders may have changed or crime syndicates are highly involved in cattle theft. The fact that it is lucrative to steal livestock should be borne in mind as livestock does not lose its value as other commodities do when stolen and this has been the case since medieval times (Ireland, 2002: 318, (Anon, 2012: 1). Livestock does have price variations due to seasonal changes, age etc., but it is not like a stolen car or cellphone that loses more than 50 per cent of the value in the illegal markets.

Comparing the number of cases reported to the number of livestock stolen

The pattern of a rise in the number of livestock stolen and a decline in the number of cases from 1995 to 1998 has been repeating itself since 2004 (see Figure 3). The reason for a rise in the number of livestock stolen is not so easily determined. Contrary to the fact that the number of livestock cases declined and indicate a slight increase since 2006, it is not the case with the number of livestock stolen.

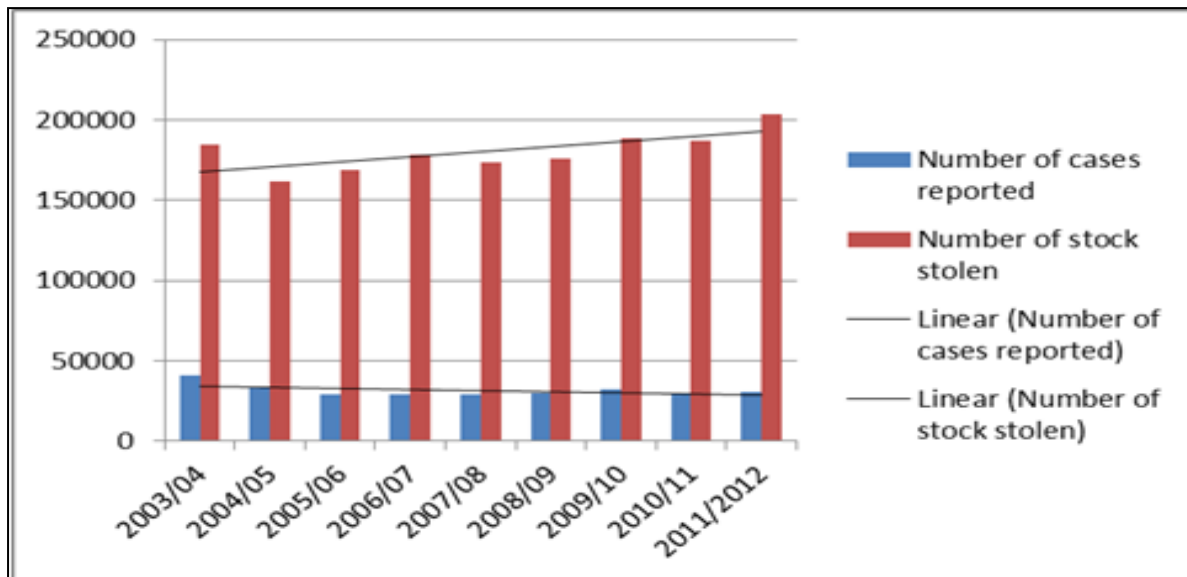
From Figure 2 it is clear that although there is a claim with reference to Figure 1 that stock theft declined by 6.9 per cent, the number of livestock involved actually steadily increased by 26.4 per cent since 2004/05 to 2011/12 (see Figure 3)

Figure 3: Number of cases reported versus number of livestock stolen



In Figure 3, the number of cases reported versus the number of livestock stolen since 1995 are compared to determine the extent of livestock theft over a long period. The fact is that the longitudinal lines in Figure 3 create a false impression that stock theft is declining. From Figure 4, where only the past 9 years is taken into account, the constant rise of 26.4 per cent in the number of livestock stolen is even more obvious.

Figure 4: Number of livestock cases reported versus number of livestock stolen



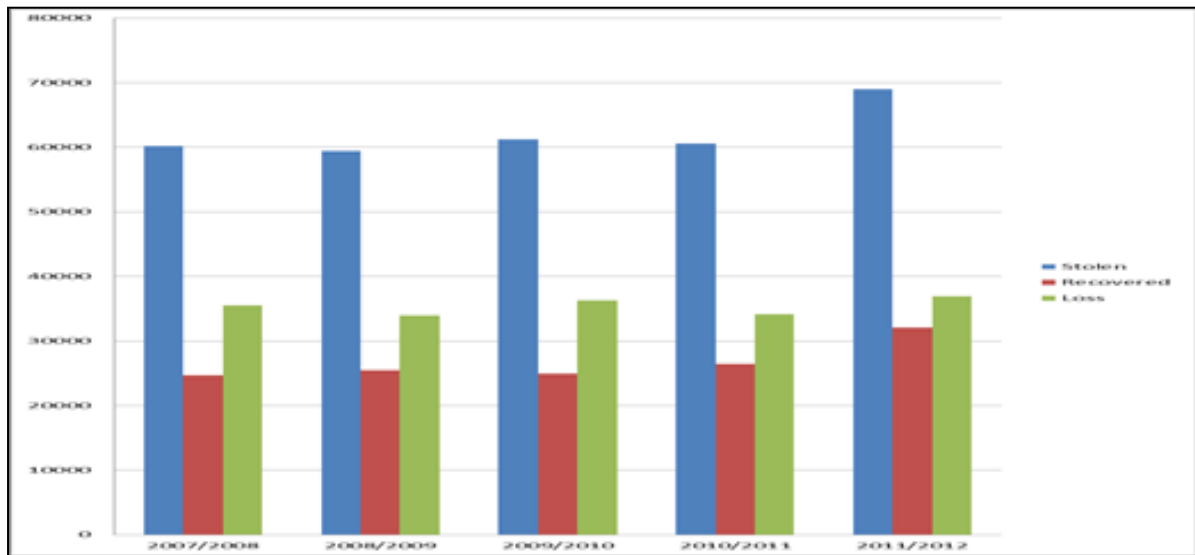
The number of stock stolen compared to the number of cases reported follow two distinct directions. The number of livestock stolen is rising back to the unprecedented numbers of the late 1990s but, on the contrary, the number of cases is declining. This inconsistency amongst the two predominant variables requires interpretation and the only rational assumption is that the modus operandi of livestock theft has changed. Previously, livestock was predominantly stolen for survival or “*potslagting*”, now the modus operandi has changed to a lucrative economic crime attracting organised crime syndicates. Lately, evidence of organised crime syndicates became obvious when 160 head of cattle was stolen during five different events between the end of June 2013 until middle August 2013 in and around the Gauteng province. The value of the stolen cattle is estimated at a loss of R2.2 million. In all five cases the same truck was identified at the crime scene by tyre prints and paint on loading pens.⁶ The ratio of livestock stolen per case further substantiates the assumption of crime syndicates as the ratio increased from 4.02 livestock stolen per case in 2002/2003 to 6.58 livestock stolen per case in 2011/2012. Cases that are not reported may have an effect on the number of livestock stolen per case, it may be argued that in cases where small numbers of livestock is not involved the case is not reported.

Number of livestock stolen per species since 2007

For many years the numbers of sheep and goats stolen were combined and not indicated separately in statistics and therefore a longitudinal profile regarding the different species in question cannot be given. From 2007, the number per species stolen have been provided separately in statistics and it is therefore possible to provide a telescopic view of the livestock theft crimes per species in the past 5 years. The number of livestock recovered and the total loss is also indicated, which provide a glimpse on the efficiency of the police in recovering stolen livestock. Caution must be taken not to confuse the number of livestock recovered with the number of arrests made or successful prosecution. It is not a given that when livestock is

recovered that an offender is apprehended. Stolen livestock is sometimes found abandoned and it cannot be traced back to a specific offender. In medieval times and in certain parts of South Africa there was a custom that if the tracks of lost or stolen stock were found near a homestead or its immediate surrounds, the head of the establishment would be held accountable for the stolen livestock. This custom was known as the spoor law in South Africa but today it is considered to be unconstitutional and has been abandoned (Ireland, 2002: 211, Bennett & Jacobs, 2012: 213).

Figure 5: Number of cattle stolen, recovered and lost

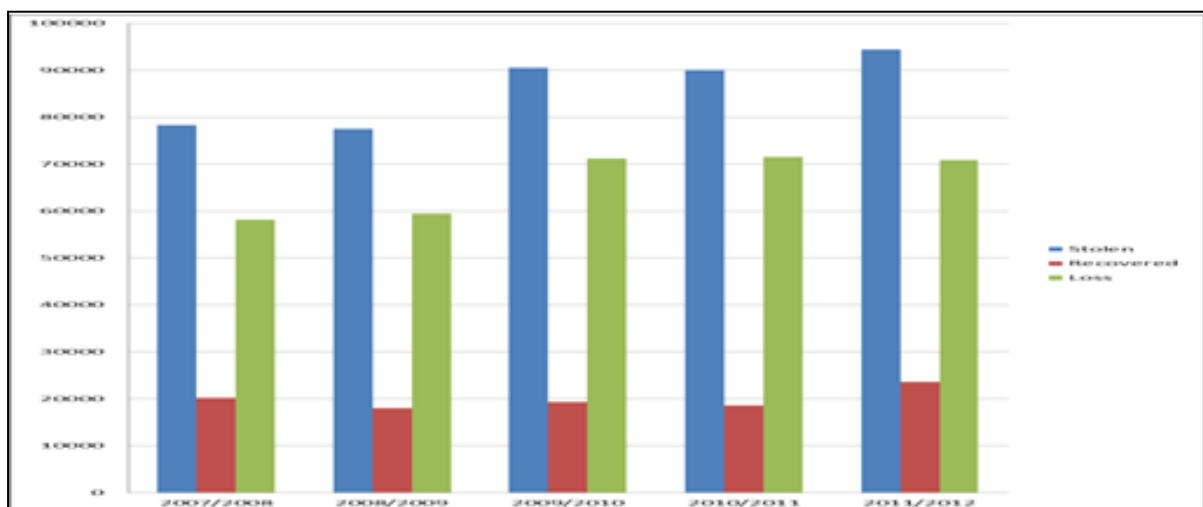


(Stock Theft Unit Head Office Ops, 2012)

In Figure 5, the number of cattle stolen hovered around the 60 000 mark for the first four years and in 2012 it spiked and reached nearly 70 000, which is a steep rise for a period of one year.

Noticeable from Figure 5 is that on average for the years in question, 42.95 per cent of cattle stolen are recovered and 57.05 per cent are lost and never recovered. The rate of recovery is also much higher for cattle than it is for sheep indicated, as in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Number of sheep stolen, recovered and lost

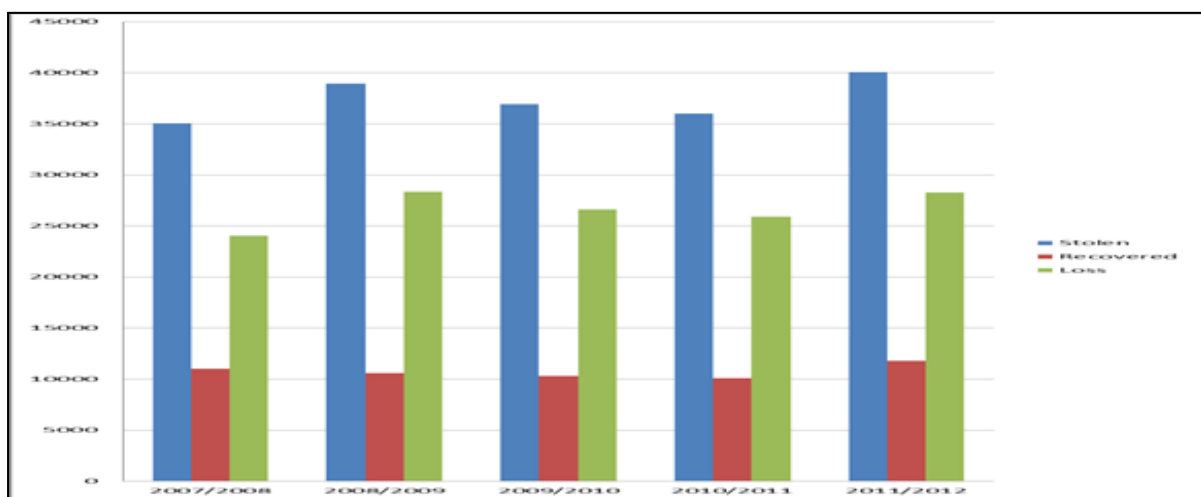


(Source: Stock Theft Unit Head Office Ops, 2012)

Contrary to cattle, the steep rise in the number of sheep stolen already occurred in 2008/2009 when the number of stolen sheep had an unprecedented rise of 13 068 from 77 472 in to 90 560 in 2009/2010. This rise in livestock theft can be attributed mainly to the world financial crisis of 2007/2008 and the sharp increase in sheep meat prices in 2008/2009 (Schutte, 2008: 9).

The numbers in Figure 5, 6 and 7 disclose that of the three species addressed in the article, the number of sheep stolen is much higher than the other species. This is mainly attributed to the belief “as dumb as a sheep”. Sheep, contrary to other species, do not make any noises when disturbed whilst this is not the case with other species; thus an easy object to steal. In farmer talk sheep is also referred to as “take aways” since they easily fit into the boot of any vehicle. These factors do have an influence on the recovery rate of sheep which is much worse than cattle. In the case of sheep stolen, only 23 per cent are recovered and 77 per cent are lost and never recovered.

Figure 7: Number of goats stolen, recovered and lost



(Source: Stock Theft Unit Head Office Ops, 2012)

The theft of goats is addressed in Figure 7 and goats, like sheep, are easier to steal because of their small size. The fact that fewer goats are stolen can be attributed to the size of national herd for goats, which are much smaller than for sheep. Another factor may be that goats make a lot of noise when caught, contrary to sheep. A trend in Figure 7 that may require further research is the tendency of goat theft to rise in leap years. This increase and decrease may be attributed to religious ceremonies, no one knows. The tendency of losses versus recovery for goats is better than sheep. In the case of goats, 29 per cent are recovered whilst 71 per cent are lost and never recovered.

The economic impact of livestock theft

In Table 2, the number of animals stolen, recovered and lost is quantified in monetary terms to indicate the economic impact of stock theft on the agricultural community. The monetary values in Table 2 are merely a adding of the numbers in Table 3 to get to the total values of all the livestock affected.

Table 2: Value of all livestock stolen, recovered and lost

Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Total stolen	R507 956 400	R547 955 600	R619 510 800	R655 814 600	R830 906 600
Total recovered	R192 641 600	R210 710 500	R224 890 800	R250 884 300	R344 271 900
Total loss	R315 314 800	R337 245 100	R394 620 000	R404 930 300	R486 634 700

The loss per species is indicated in Table 3. The numbers in Figure 2 are multiplied by the stock values indicated in Table 4 to get an estimate of the financial losses. It is obvious that cattle contributes to the highest losses mainly due to their high values whilst sheep on the other hand – number wise – are more prone to theft although their financial losses are much less.

Table 3: Value of livestock stolen, recovered and lost per species

Livestock	Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Cattle	Stolen	R391 059 500	R416 024 000	R459 165 000	R484 800 000	R621 099 000
	Recovered	R160 309 500	R178 227 000	R187 245 000	R211 664 000	R288 855 000
	Loss	R230 750 000	R237 797 000	R271 920 000	R273 136 000	R332 244 000
Sheep	Stolen	R 78 332 000	R 85 219 200	R108 648 000	R117 022 100	R141 675 000
	Recovered	R 20 209 000	R 19 792 300	R 23 202 000	R 24 103 300	R 35 353 500
	Loss	R 58 123 000	R 65 426 900	R 85 446 000	R 92 918 800	R106 321 500
Goats	Stolen	R 38 564900	R 46 712 400	R 51 697 800	R 53 992 500	R 68 132 600
	Recovered	R 12 123 100	R 12 691 200	R 14 443 800	R 15 117 000	R 20 063 400
	Loss	R 26 441800	R 34 021 200	R 37 254 000	R 38 875500	R 48 069 200

On a yearly basis during the November meeting of the NSTF, the average monetary value of livestock is determined, which will be used for the next year to calculate the economic impact of the crime. These values are a gut feeling predicted on values of mainly female animals but do not take into account the loss of future breeding herds and genetics. These values are indicated in Table 4

Table 4: Value of livestock per year

Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Cattle	6 500	7 000	7 500	8 000	9 000
Sheep	1 000	1 100	1 200	1 300	1 500
Goats	1 100	1 200	1 400	1 500	1 700

CONCLUSION

The essential role of agriculture in terms of the country's economy and day to day functioning is not always fully understood. Agriculture is one of the cornerstones in any country's economy and provides for the food security of individual households and countries globally and addresses poverty alleviation in small-scale communal farming in developing countries as South Africa. Irrespective of this economic importance the impact of crime on agricultural farms in South Africa is inadequately researched. One of the reasons for this is an international tendency, with a bias towards research in urban areas and therefore a total

neglect of rural areas. Another aspect is the emphasis on rhinoceros poaching, which is a highly emotional issue as a result of which livestock theft is neglected. It is concluded that rhinoceros poaching as a frequently mentioned topic in the media populate the mind of the general public and livestock theft seriously affecting the poorer individual and community slip away from awareness and become totally forgotten. Food security is easily forgotten by affluent financial people in cities whilst the livelihood of red meat producers and poor communities relying on livestock for survival is threatened. The neglect of livestock theft in the mind of people is not limited to the general public but is also the case within the academia, criminal justice and the agricultural community as a whole. The author would like to appeal to academia within penology, criminology, police sciences, security studies, other criminal justice related sciences, natural sciences and economical sciences areas to realise livestock theft threatens food security globally and is in need of extensive research.

The following general themes are in need of research. Livestock serves a multipurpose within communal and commercial systems of farming, these systems are comparable to a certain extent but the uses and economic impact of livestock vary considerably across countries and across regions in a country. Limited research has been done on the economic effect of livestock theft in communal communities but effect of livestock theft on commercial farmers is, however, non-existing in South Africa. The emotional impact of livestock theft notwithstanding the economic impact on victims cannot be ignored. The bond between human and animal is never a pure economic relation and the effect on humans who lose animals to livestock theft is an excellent research topic for the social sciences. The establishment, involvement and roles of the social groups in reducing livestock theft have not been researched. Researching these contributions can establish the reasons for the different directions the trends in cases reported and number of livestock stolen is following. Lately there are groups that have latched onto stock theft as a way of enriching themselves indicating the involvement of organised crime in livestock theft. The change in modus operandi of the offender requires that a study focusing on the profile of the stock thief is long overdue in South Africa. In South Africa, it is a trait that a large number of economic crimes are never reported to the authorities and livestock theft is not an exception. Although some efforts are made to determine the reasons for this phenomenon no research has been conducted and it may be established that the real reasons is totally the opposite of current allegations.

This article sets the stage for possible new research topics within and array of academic fields and concludes that this research is important for the food security of South Africa.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Chief Executive Officer of the Red Meat Producers Organisation of South Africa.

² The statement is based on author's experience within the industry and the extent of reporting livestock theft within the NSTF.

³ A term used for livestock stolen simply to be slaughtered and eaten immediately.

⁴ The information used in Figures 1 to 4 are a combination of the following multiple sources: SAPS, 2000, SAPS, 2009, SAPS, 2011a, SAPS, 2011b & SAPS, 2012.

⁵ This information gleaned from various discussions with members of the SAPS Stock Theft Units, National Office North West and Gauteng.

⁶ Information provided to the author as Chairperson of Gauteng Stock Theft Forum by farmers (who wish to remain anonymous), investigating police officers and tollgate operators.