



Hog Thefts Raise New Security Issues Could it Happen **ON YOUR FARM?**

Dave Struthers, part owner of Struthers Farms, Inc. in Story County, Iowa, knows firsthand about a trespasser wreaking havoc on his family's farm. In March of 2008, Struthers Farms joined the ranks of farmers who have had property and animals mistreated by vandals and thieves. Break-ins and thefts also have been in the news recently in Minnesota and other states (page 3).

In the case of Struthers Farms, no one was living on the actual property. "My parents live around the corner, but there was no one on the property to witness what happened," Struthers said.

His brother-in-law, who works at the farm, arrived to check on the livestock and found pigs from one of the eight hoop barns running loose all over the property. Also finding some pigs injured and others dead, he contacted Struthers.

"The pin was pulled out and replaced in the latch with the gate open," Struthers said. "Pigs don't do that on their own, so I knew a person had been involved. That is when we called the police."

Tire tracks and pieces of bumper were found in the yard. About 30 pigs were found, injured or killed by the vandal's truck. The police gathered information and evidence and began investigating. Reporters interviewed Struthers as

well as other employees and helped spread the word about the incident.

"Together, with others in the area, we were able to offer a reward of \$1,500 in hopes it would persuade someone to share helpful information," Struthers said. "It worked. Apparently, the man who let the pigs out got stuck and had to call someone to come pull his truck out. The rescuer shared information with the police and helped them prove what happened."

Sharing his Story to Help Other Producers

Now Struthers talks to other farmers about keeping farms safe, including at the Pork Checkoff-funded PORK Academy during June's World Pork Expo in Des Moines. Struthers was joined in the session on farm safety by Kent Mowrer, field specialist with the Coalition to Support Iowa's Farmers.

"If something like this happens to you, first take care of the animals," Struthers shared with producers at PORK Academy. "Make sure you don't touch anything. Secondly, call the police."

For tips from Mowrer on keeping your farm safe, as well as more about what to do if vandals strike, see inside. 📌

Don't Make It Easy for Criminals

With the rising number of incidents involving theft and vandalism in rural areas and on farms, protection can make the difference between safety and tragedy. Kent Mowrer, field specialist with the Coalition to Support Iowa's Farmers, shared these tips at the Pork Checkoff's PORK Academy at the 2011 World Pork Expo.

1. Look at your property through the eyes of a potential criminal.

Criminals look to wreak havoc without being seen, taking much time or making much noise. Consider your office, records, feed and feed systems, alarm systems, electricity, vaccines, equipment and supplies. What could a criminal easily damage or steal?

2. Vary your routine.

Be seen at the site often and vary routines. If criminals figure out there is a regular schedule, they will have a window of opportunity to cause destruction with lesser fear of being caught.

3. Keep a good record of past employees.

Often vandals and thieves are disgruntled ex-employees. They know when and where to attack.

4. Secure tools and equipment.

Keep machinery and vehicles in a secure building or, at minimum, a well-lighted area. Do NOT leave equipment in a remote area, as it makes it an easy target. Always take the keys out and lock every vehicle.

5. Lock all doors.

Secure all entrances to the facility by locking them. It is also a good idea to lock all interior doors.



6. Secure doors and door frames.

Steel doors and frames are more difficult to break into. If the door has a window, use a dead bolt requiring a key on both sides.

7. Install security lighting.

The more lights on the property, the more difficult it is for a vandal or thief to remain unseen. Install additional lights that operate on time switches or motion-activated sensors to discourage criminals.

8. Utilize a camera or surveillance system.

Law enforcement officials highly recommend installing some form of security system, referring to it as "a cheap form of insurance." Outdoor cameras work well for vehicle identification, but indoor cameras (placed at the point of entry) are more successful at identifying someone.

9. Create an Emergency Action Plan.

When everyone knows what to do when disaster strikes, less damage results. Develop an Emergency Action Plan to help identify potentially dangerous situations and to determine how to respond to them. (See page 3.)

10. Secure the premises.

Limit access to the farm by gating all entrances. Preferably, have only one entrance to the animal area to better control and monitor all people and vehicles coming and going. For additional security, consider fencing the perimeter of the site. Post signs at the farm entrance that indicate no unauthorized individuals should be on the site.

11. Identify property.

Obtain an identification number from local law enforcement and use it on all property for traceability purposes. Livestock can be identified with a tattoo; tools and equipment can be identified with a permanent stamp; and grain can be identified with "confetti" that can be augured in with the grain.

12. Get involved in the community.

When you are part of a community, more people care what happens to you, and crime statistics often go down.



Recent Hog Thefts Reported in Minnesota

Swine barns in southern Minnesota have recently become a target for thieves who have stolen hundreds of pigs from at least two farms in Nicollet County and Kandiyohi County. Minnesota law enforcement officials are urging pork producers across the country to step up security measures at their own farms.

“We haven’t had much trouble with situations like this before,” said Marc Chadderdon, a criminal investigator with the Nicollet County Sheriff’s Department, who noted that many of the thefts in his area occurred from Aug. 14 to Sept. 17. “These cases can be tough to investigate, because they often aren’t reported right way.”

Investigators are attempting to learn the whereabouts of 150 pigs, which were stolen from a farm near Lafayette, Minn. The farm owner told deputies that he had gone in to cull all the market-ready pigs from his barns and found 150 animals missing.

Nicollet County investigators also are working with deputies from Kandiyohi County, where 590 pigs were stolen from a large livestock operation near Lake Lillian on Aug. 15. The value of those pigs is estimated at more than \$100,000.

There are a number of similarities in these thefts, said Chadderdon, who noted that the perpetrators appear to be:

- **Conducting surveillance.** Anyone can go online to Google Earth (www.google.com/earth) and pinpoint the location of swine facilities. They also can identify the operations that are the most isolated, said Chadderdon, who also has been in contact with law enforcement officials in Lyon County, Iowa, who alerted him to this possibility.

- **Thwarting alarm systems.** In the Minnesota break-ins, the vandals cut through the ventilation curtain and bird netting on the side of the barns.

“They cut near a post so the entry point wasn’t obvious,” Chadderdon said. While the Nicollet County farm had an alarm system, it wasn’t triggered by this style of break-in.

- **Stealing animals that aren’t marked or tattooed.** In addition, prime targets have been 250- to 275-pound animals that are ready for market.

“Whoever is stealing the hogs appears to have some knowledge of the hog industry,” Chadderdon said.

- **Selling the hogs as quickly as possible.** Law enforcement officials suspect that the thieves are probably selling the stolen hogs at auction barns and may be moving 30 to 40 hogs at a time.

Since producers make a large investment in their livestock and their farms, it’s important to take some simple steps to protect these assets, said Chadderdon, echoing the advice Kent Mowrer, with the Coalition to Support Iowa’s Farmers, offers on page two. Specifically, Chadderdon encourages pork producers to:

- **Conduct animal counts.** Accurate numbers are key. “I know farmers don’t like to take the time to do this, but

it’s the only way to know for sure if you’re missing any livestock,” Chadderdon said.

- **Report suspicious activity.** Don’t be afraid to contact local law enforcement officials if something seems amiss at your farm.

“Also, if someone doesn’t normally sell hogs to your auction barn or packing plant, or an existing customer is suddenly selling a lot more hogs than normal, don’t be afraid to report it,” Chadderdon said. “You can remain anonymous when you call the authorities.”

Do You Have an Emergency Action Plan?

Someone has attacked and vandalized your property. Do you and your employees know what to do? If your farm has an emergency action plan, you do.

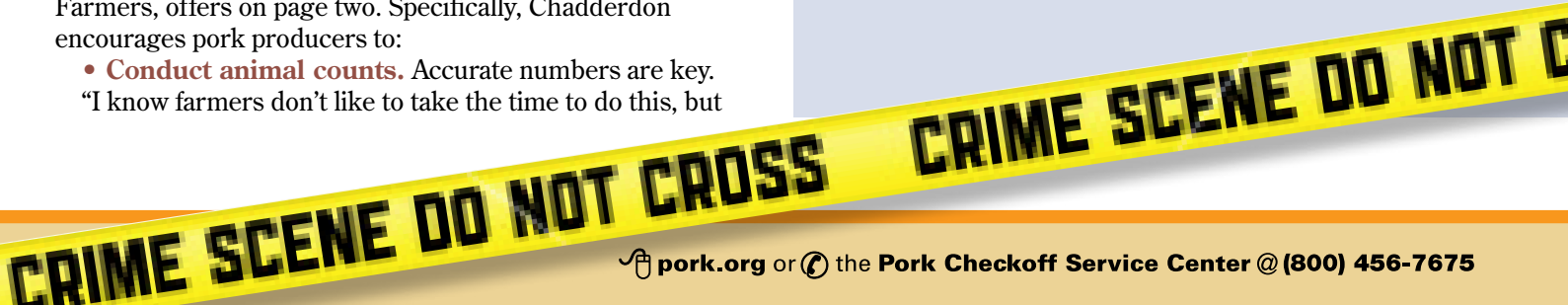
“Having an emergency action plan in place is critical for the health and safety of both animals and workers,” said Cindy Cunningham, the assistant vice president of communications for the Pork Checkoff. “Having thought through what you will do on your farm should you be vandalized or have a fire, an ice storm or some other sort of emergency can mean the difference between quickly dealing with the issue or it becoming an even larger issue.”

Developing an emergency action plan is a simple process, she added. The Pork Checkoff provides a web-based tool, found at <http://eap.pork.org>, to guide producers through each step in developing their own plan. When the plan is completed, it can be printed out for distribution or posting for easy reference.

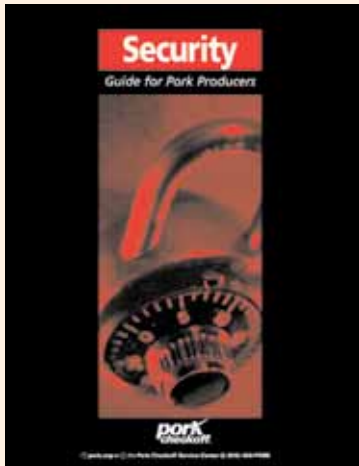
“The key to a successful emergency action plan is to ensure that everyone who might be involved – family members, farm employees and even first responders – knows that there is a plan and what their role will be,” Cunningham said.

An emergency action plan is one of the documents reviewed as part of the Pork Quality Assurance® Plus Site Assessment. Also, the plan complies with Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations, which mandates that a printed copy of an emergency action plan must be available to all employees.

“It’s easy to think that you won’t have a break-in or other emergency at your farm,” Cunningham said. “But it can happen anywhere. With an emergency action plan in place, you will be prepared to take appropriate actions.”



Hog Thefts Put Farm SECURITY in the News



For more about keeping your farm safe, go to pork.org to download this 16-page booklet from the Pork Checkoff.

More than once, Jeff Dobbs, a lieutenant with the Story County Sheriff's Department in Iowa, has seen the destructive nature of theft and vandalism on farms. He shared his knowledge with the Pork Checkoff in an attempt to help keep farms safe. One of the most important ways to reduce the risk of attack on a farm is to simply know what you have.

"Too often, people have a tendency not to have a firm grasp on what equipment and personal property is on the farm until they need to use it and find it gone," Dobbs said. "It is very helpful for farmers to keep an inventory of items around the farm, with serial numbers when possible. If the worst happens, the inventory provides a detailed list for law enforcement officials to use when tracking missing items."

Also, it is a good idea to let law enforcement officials in your area know where your farms are located and whether or not anyone lives on the land, Dobbs said. It can be beneficial when patrolling to know what to look for and if anything is amiss.

If producers see suspicious activity, they should call the police immediately, Dobbs said. Often small things happen around the farm first as a way for the intruders to get familiar with the surroundings and test the security of the farm.

This newsletter, provided by the Pork Checkoff, offers other ideas and tips on how to help keep your farm from being vandalized, as well as updates on the latest pork thefts in the news.



This is a special-topic newsletter sent periodically to you by the Pork Checkoff

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Inside: Tips on keeping your farm safe from vandals.



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