

Carnage on farms Unstoppable wave of poachers

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Elvira Hattingh - Dogs that tear apart sheep during raids, live cattle whose heels have been chopped off or strangled in wire traps, as well as game that is stabbed with assegai and patiently dies - these are the order of the day on Namibian farms.

Even pregnant animals are not spared by poachers and thieves, while farmers just have to watch helplessly.

More than 90 people across the country have contacted Republican over the past two weeks after questions were asked as part of an informal social media survey about livestock and game theft. They say the situation is getting out of hand and are "finally financially eradicating" many farmers.

At the same time, many farmers are of the opinion that law enforcers and the legal system are either incapable, or unwilling to put an end to this. Penalties are too light, they say, cases are not settled or thrown out due to poor policing, or the police take days to show up if a crime of this nature is reported.

STATISTICS

The Nossob Crime Prevention Forum (NCPF) is one of the few such forums that carefully records all thefts and looting in their area - the Kalkfeld, Omitara, Witvlei and Steinhausen area. According to information provided by their chairman, Mr. Jürgen Matthaai, provided to Republikein, has been poaching especially cattle and game in recent months.

The value of the stolen cattle during the first ten months of the year in the Nossob area amounted to more than N \$ 1.3 million, while the value of the small stock amounted to N \$ 134 100 and of game N \$ 299 250. Other items worth of N \$ 160 000 was also stolen.

It appears that many other farming areas in the country are affected by this type of crime, with areas such as Omaruru, Otjiwarongo, Grootfontein, Kombat, Keetmanshoop and Mariental, among others, also booming.

REPEATED OFFENSERS

From Stampriet's area let Mr. Hannes Meyer that they are experiencing enormous problems on the farm Bernavy. In the past three years, more than 200 sheep have been stolen from them or bitten to death by foreign dogs. On occasion, 98 sheep were bitten to death at one time.

Meyer says eight cases have been opened and many of these against one specific suspect, who had previously been in jail for similar offenses. Cases against the suspect and his accomplices "get nowhere", he says, as dossiers and witnesses "disappear".

"They work very inhumanly with the animals. That which is not torn by the dogs and left just to die and rot, its ears are cut off at the head or they are tied with wire. "They charge up what they can and the others burn in the sun if we don't find them fast enough," Meyer said.

"Animals that are torn too badly by the dogs are left because he cannot sell them," says Meyer.

From Omaruru's area let me know. Alina Vogel from the farm Gross Okandjou 2020 and the past year has been very bad when it comes to poaching gemsbok with the help of dogs and assegai.

She says it has reached a point where gemsbok numbers become scarce and the animals run away when they see people. "They are being brutally hunted and slowly, with assegai, killed. It does not matter to the poachers whether it is a pregnant cow or not," she says.

HEELS CUT OFF

This past Thursday, five suspects were caught near Grootfontein when they found a cow on the farm Okamutombe of Mr. Mecki Schneider was killed. A week before that, another cow was slaughtered with them.

Mr. Hagen Eggert, who also farms near Grootfontein, says in their area the "situation is getting worse now". In recent weeks, two solar pumps have been stolen from him and he has found one of his Brahman stud heifers alive, but with his heels chopped off - something that cattle thieves often do so that cattle cannot get away.

He believes the cow was left like that because the perpetrators were disturbed. Eggert had to kill her.

He hires the services of a security firm, which has already found numerous abattoirs where its kudus, hartebeest and gemsbok have been captured and slaughtered.

All these thieves, according to him, come from a nearby relocation farm. He says in addition to the monetary losses, he now also has to pay for security services.

Another farmer in the area came across one of his stud heifers where she had been trapped in a wire trap for four days and another farmer, Mr. Nick Nell, says he has lost about 100 sheep to theft within the past 90 days. -
elvira@republikein.com.na