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## Witvlei farmers: Legal system fails us New wave of livestock and game thieves

26 October 2021 | [Crime](#)





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Elvira Hattingh - Farmers in the Witvlei area are once again discouraged with a spate of livestock and game crime over the past month, saying the legal system is failing to provide any protection to them or their property.

Mr. Jürgen Matthaei, chairman of the Nossob Crime Prevention Forum (NCPF), says that over the past three to four weeks, numerous game and especially cattle have been stolen, with at least six Witvlei farmers reporting losses at the forum.

"The thieves are also becoming more sophisticated every day and are now entering farmers' land with horses. "Otherwise, stolen cattle are driven away by lorries," Matthaei told Republikein on Thursday.

"At the same time, the same livestock and game thieves are repeatedly caught and simply released on bail, despite the fact that many similar cases are pending against them. The cases are just never settled," said a discouraged Matthaei.

He says farmers in the area suspect a specific suspect, who was re-released on bail about a month and a half ago, is behind the latest wave of theft.

"It's as if they are taking revenge," he says.

#### COW EATED LIVE

Matthaei said cattle thieves attacked Mr. Wilfried Pack, who farms on the farm Grünental near Witvlei, chased two cows into a manga.

"They must have been disturbed while they were cutting off the first one's throat. They just left her and fled.

"The cow's paws were pulled through the manga's poles, she could not get loose and the foxes started eating her alive," Matthaei said. Farm workers only came across this scene last Monday.

Matthaei says during the crime prevention forum's patrols, they also came across a stripped waterbuck on the back of a vehicle last Tuesday. Two suspects were then arrested for possession of protected game.

"Our farmers are discouraged," Matthaai said. He referred to farmers from the Otjiwarongo area who had started a petition against bailing out habitual criminals when it comes to livestock and game theft and that the cars with which they commit the crimes should be declared forfeited. "

Two other Witvlei farmers who went through include mr. Elia Emvula of whom one verse has been passed down, and mr. Alfred Kamupingene missing four verses.

"I'm so frustrated, I've given up," said Kamupingene, whose tollie was recently stabbed with an assegai by thieves from a horse's back.

He said he took two police officers to a scene in December where one of his heifers was slaughtered, only to later find out one of the policemen was involved in the slaughter of his cattle.

"The carcass was found in this man's car.

"The police are hopeless. I have had so many losses over the years. I wanted to take care of my family with the money I earn from my livestock, but someone else walks away with my harvest. "If I catch someone on my farm stealing livestock, I will be the one to sleep in jail," he said.

#### HORSES AVAILABLE EVERYWHERE

Me. Ulrike Hart, who has been slaughtered two heifers and a gemsbok in the past month, explains that the thieves are moving around with horses.

"The horses roam freely on Witvlei. So it's easy to take any horse and enter your farm. "You hear and therefore see nothing, they cut the fences, load the slaughtered or stripped animal on the horse and take it to the tarmac, from where it is driven away," she said.

Hart, who is now involved in the crime-fighting forum, says high-profile businessmen are involved in the theft in the area. "The motives therefore have nothing to do with hunger."

She also believes they are being failed by the legal system.

"If you are out on bail and commit a crime again, should it not be suspended and you arrested? It does not happen!" she said.

Mr. Thunis Cocklin, another Witvlei farmer, also lost 16 cattle between 24 September and 4 October. He says this case is still being investigated, but so far this year 41 of his cattle have already been stolen.

"My opinion is that the justice system completely lets us down," he says.

Cocklin says the past two to three years have been particularly bad for livestock and game thieves.

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