

Farmers fed up with butchering, poaching



LOST ... Remains of animals that were slaughtered and stolen at farms in the Grootfontein area. Photos: Contributed

By **Adam Hartman**

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Cattle rustlers and poachers are terrorising farmers in the Erongo and Otjozondjupa regions, including in the Omaruru, Kalkfeld, Otjiwarongo and Waterberg areas.

Namibian Agricultural Union executive council member Günther Kahl, who is also a farmer, told The Namibian last week that livestock theft and poaching have spiralled out of control, leaving the farming community distraught and enraged.

Statistics reveal losses running into millions of dollars and large numbers of livestock and game since 2013.

“We face the slaughtering of cattle every day. It’s really discouraging and frustrating for us and the farming community,” he said.

Eager to cast a spotlight on this menace, Kahl has appealed to farmers to expose the scale of the problem by making it public through media platforms.

“It’s vital that our politicians see the real situation,” he noted.

The thefts are broad in scale and include Namibia’s wildlife.

“Our game in this country is facing serious threats. About 15 years ago, penalties for poaching were as severe as those for murder. But when the penalties were reduced, poaching incidents surged,” lamented Kahl.

He further underscored the inefficiency of the justice system by highlighting that “about 90% of these cases since 2013 are unsolved”.

Almut Koch detailed a recent incident, about two weeks ago, on farm Eremutua – situated north of Omaruru, between Kalkfeld and Omatjette – where some men slaughtered cattle and transported the meat on a donkey cart.



While the police managed to apprehend one of the culprits, most of the meat vanished.

Not isolated to Eremutua, another incident occurred on farm Klein Okombahe in the same area a few days later. The owners revealed that poachers slaughtered two pregnant cows during the last weekend of July.

Only the hides were left behind, with the suspects loading the rest onto a vehicle and vanishing into the night.

Last Thursday, tragedy struck farmer Poen Brink when rustlers butchered a Brahman breeding bull named Rooi Koper (Red Copper) on his farm just outside Grootfontein. The bull, valued at N\$100 000, was the sixth one slaughtered and stolen at Brink's property since June.

Brink said this was just the latest blow in a series of thefts that has plagued his farm over the last year and a half.

Brink has tried to ramp up security measures in response to the increasing thefts.

"I have already take all precautionary measures and even appointed security guards, who regularly patrol my farm," Brink said.

Ironically, it was during one of these routine patrols that his security team stumbled upon the scene where the bull had been slaughtered. Only the bull's hide and ears remained, while its meat – estimated ot weigh 400 kilograms – was loaded onto a vehicle and transported away.

"The criminals are dropped off by a taxi, and then they walk and chase the animals to the post into the corner where they kill them," Brink said.

"I'm just fed up," he said, adding that his guards now patrol day and night, diverting them from regular farm work.

He said he and others are tempted to take the law into their own hands if they catch the criminals.

"The cattle theft is out of hand, and nobody's doing anything about it," Brink emphasised. "One day, there won't be any more people on our farms because all the animals will be lost. There will be no more work, there will be no more food; it's not the solution for our country."