

# Livestock farmers lose N\$14m to theft, drought

Business, Business Home 1 | Published: 1 day ago | Last Updated: 1 day ago | Written by Matthew Dlamini



**Livestock and game farmers have lost more than N\$14 million worth of animals to predation, theft, drought-related illnesses and disasters, as well as property damage by problem animals.**

According to the latest issue of the Namibia Agricultural Union (NAU) newsletter, a comprehensive analysis by the Livestock Producers' Organisation (LPO) reveals a staggering loss of N\$14 399 440 stemming from only 1 248 reports from the organisation's members.

"This represents a fraction of the total livestock sector. Farmers feel discouraged that nothing is being done about their situation, and therefore the number of reports received is very low," the NAU says.

The union says efforts must be made going forward to motivate farmers to provide these statistics to get a more representative figure.

Rian van Wyk, who farms between Okakarara and Osire, says farmers are being let down by the judicial system, which continues to grant known suspects bail, who come back to slaughter more cattle.

"The police are even getting discouraged, because they arrest the same guys all the time," he says, adding he lost 10 cattle to thieves last year.

"Other farmers lost between 30 and 40 head of cattle, and that is a huge loss," he says.

This was corroborated by farmer Siegfried Schneifer, who says this is a big challenge to farms near towns and villages.

He says while the police are doing their best to arrest suspects, the judicial system is not coping and is releasing the suspects on small amounts of bail – only for them to continue stealing as it has become a lucrative business.

"The money they pay as bail is so little, compared to what they make per beast they slaughter," says Schneifer, who adds he has lost hundreds of animals to stock thieves.

He says farmers have resorted to employing more security personnel, including large security firms.

According to the NAU, predation is a prominent factor in livestock losses, accounting for N\$5 641 729.

Cattle, sheep, goats, game and other farm animals have all fallen prey to predators, with 552 reported incidents leading to the loss of 5 686 animals.

"For livestock farmers, the toll of predator attacks goes beyond the financial burden. It translates into sleepless nights, heightened vigilance, and the emotional burden of witnessing the fruits of their labour fall prey to the wild," the union says.

"We must recognise the toll this takes on the mental health and well-being of farmers, who bear the weight of these losses," the NAU notes, adding that encounters with elephants and other problem animals, such as warthogs, baboons and porcupines, underline the challenges of co-existence between agriculture and wildlife.

The union says 44 reports of conflict with wildlife have resulted in property worth N\$678 700 being damaged, emphasising the need for sustainable approaches to mitigate human-wildlife conflict.

The prolonged drought has accounted for N\$4 809 300 in livestock and game losses from 380 reports, due to illness and disasters, the NAU says.

Theft and poaching remain persistent issues, resulting in N\$3 253 711 in losses.

"Cattle, sheep, game and other assets, including solar equipment, have all been targeted. With reported incidents, this aspect demands a coordinated effort between law-enforcement agencies, communities and farmers to curb such illicit activities," the union says.

The union says addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that combines effective predator management, sustainable wildlife conservation strategies and adaptation measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

“Collaboration and innovation will be crucial in building resilience within the agricultural sector and ensuring the long-term sustainability of livestock and game farming in the face of these formidable challenges,” the NAU says.

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