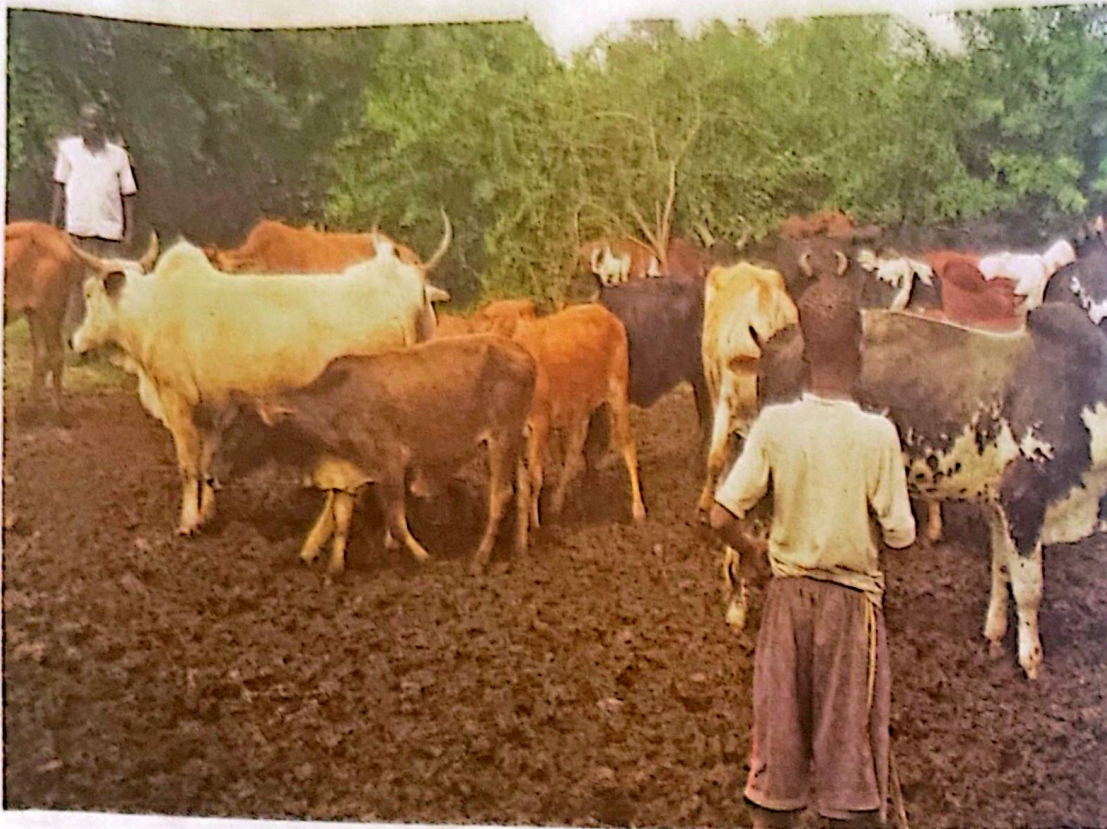




On guard. A family looks after cattle in Palam Sub-county, Katakwi District, recently. Residents have asked government to intervene and solve the problem of cattle theft in the area.
PHOTO BY SIMON PETER EMWAMU

Residents cry out over cattle theft

Issue. Residents say despite the successful disarmament exercise in the region, cattle theft continues to soar.

BY SIMON PETER EMWAMU
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

KATAKWI. Residents of Palam, Ngariam, Magoro and Ongongoja sub-counties in Katakwi District are demanding for an immediate intervention into the continued theft of animals by Karimojong warriors.

Katakwi District borders the Karamoja sub-region, made up of seven districts, with communities practising pastoralism.

The angry residents allege that despite the successful disarmament exercise that was launched by President Museveni in 2004, in the sub-region, cattle theft is still a challenge.

They now want government to intervene and protect their property. In Teso sub-region, animals are considered as a source of food, wealth and offered as gifts during traditional marriage ceremonies.

Reports compiled by the local leaders in the two sub-counties indicate that more than 217 head of cattle were allegedly stolen between 2016 and 2017 by the Karimojong, despite the presence of the Anti-Stock Theft Unit (ASTU) and UPDF forces at the borders of the sub-regions.

Recovered animals

The Ngariam LC3 chairperson, Mr John Francis Otude, told *Daily Monitor* in an interview that out of the 217 heads stolen only 77 have been recovered.

"Every time theft of animals is registered, the foot marks have always ended up in Karamoja sub-region. We identify some of our head of cattle in various kraals, but this alone hasn't helped us get back our animals.

"Karamojong are so witty, they now demand that we seek redress in courts of law to prove ownership," Mr Otude revealed.

The Palam Sub-county chair-

person, Mr Emmanuel Ojirot, says out of 199 heads stolen from his area, 70 cattle have not been recovered.

"When thefts are registered, we make reports to the security points and follow up but in most cases the animals are not recovered," he said.

"As UPDF and our sister force ASTU, our commitment to securing the border of Teso - Karamoja and the animals belonging to the people of Katakwi has been tested and trusted. Our appeal to the residents is to always alert us whenever an incident is registered."

CAPT HERBERT ARINAITWE, 3RD DIVISION
ARMY SPOKESPERSON

Mr Ojirot confirmed that the vice has continued because some of the elders from Karamoja, especially in Nakapiripirit District, do not condemn the act.

"The solution to this would be recreation of community kraals but since people are no longer in camps, it's impossible to have them," he said.

Mr Stephen Aमित, a resident of Palam, who has lost six heads of cattle this year, said he has never recovered any of them.

"I followed the foot marks of my cattle together with the soldiers till they got lost in Nakapiripirit. The army promised to continue tracking their whereabouts but I have not received any communication for the last nine month," he explained.

Mr Aमित said he now spends sleepless nights in the company of his brothers guarding the kraal.

The Karamoja 3rd Division army spokesperson, Capt Herbert Arinaitwe, confirmed that isolated cases of cattle theft are being continuously registered.

"As UPDF and our sister force ASTU, our commitment to securing the border of Teso - Karamoja and the animals belonging to the people of Katakwi has been tested and trusted. Our appeal to the residents is to always alert us whenever an incident is registered," Mr Arinaitwe said.