

Nip theft of cattle in the bud

There have been increasing reports of cattle being stolen around the country. Some would say this is not unusual. Especially as we approach the festive season.

The difference now, however, is that whereas in the past people were stealing a single cow or two now the thieves are helping themselves to larger numbers at a time. Using trucks to spirit them away, often in the dead of the night.

Despite the obvious fact that the thieves are obviously becoming more brazen, it also points to the fact that they are getting more organised. They are graduating from petty theft to more organised crime.

This is dangerous on very many fronts. Such criminals are often linked into regional and even international crime networks, are likely to compromise local officials to allow them do their bidding and attract other illicit activity into the area like smuggling, armed robbery, human and drug trafficking.

And Uganda with its inadequate rule of law institutions would be fertile hunting ground for these criminal types.

For starters, we need to enforce the laws on trading cattle and animals. Animals should not be moved without valid trading licenses and permits. The Police should be on the lookout for this. We should probably introduce or enforce laws that restrict animals from being moved at night.

Relatedly, laws should be enforced on the licensing of butchers and slaughter houses around the country. That the proprietors of these establishments should verify that the animals they are slaughtering have been regularly procured.

These and other measure should help nip the alarming trend in the bud.

In addition, security agencies should take a keen interest in the development, for the simple reason that can constitute a national security threat. This is not the problem of one area or another or some village Police station or the other.

The Government needs to clamp down on this criminal activity before it becomes too big to roll back.

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