

Farmers worried over cattle theft

Advice. Farmers have been advised to employ workers with valid documents such as National IDs and letters from Local Council leaders to fight the crime.

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MBARARA. Security officials have advised farmers in Ankole to carefully scrutinise people they employ to look after their livestock, saying some workers are conniving with thieves to steal the animals.

The Mbarara Resident Commissioner, Maj Martha Asiimwe, told the district council on Monday that 14 cases of cattle theft were reported in April and 16 cases this month.

"We have found that farmers employ workers who they do not know. This is the cause of increased theft of livestock. We are asking all people in the district to first know the person before employing them," Maj Asiimwe said.

The Mbarara District Police Commander, Mr Jaffar Magyezi, said the vice had been contained but that it has resumed. "From January to July in 2017, theft of livestock was very rampant but together with farmers, we fought it," Mr Magyezi said.

He added: "We have found out that thieves have changed the strategy. They no longer invade a kraal and take away cows as they used to. They first befriend your family members and most especially workers on the farm, give them money and then they steal the animals."

Mr Moses Tumushabe, one of the victims and a resident of Kyarwabuganda Cell in Kakiika Division, said: "One evening, I had 70 cows. We closed the kraal together

with the workers but when we went to milk in the morning, we found the fence broken and two cows were missing. We searched for them all over the cell and beyond but could not find them. We put announcements on local radio stations but we could not find them either. I decided to go to DPC Mbarara to seek a police officer to guard my farm."

He added that while at the police station, one officer showed him a picture of the cows that had been recovered from thieves and two of them were his.

"We need security to patrol every night. Crime preventers can't help because they are not armed and can't patrol," he said.

REPORTED CASES

Police reportedly intercepted 10 lorries carrying cows in April and May without movement permits from the districts of Kiruhura, Ibanda, and Isingiro that are under quarantine. In 2017, police received livestock theft cases in Rwizi region as follows; Ntungamo 197, Mbarara 128, Kiruhura 112, Isingiro 102 and Ibanda 79.

To stem the vice, police are profiling animal thieves in the district.

Some are those that have been released by courts. Mr Magyezi said they are going to arrest all the suspects to screen them.

One of the three suspects being held at Mbarara Police Station allegedly received a bribe of Shs300,000 from thieves who stole 14 cows from a farm at Kashaka Village, Bubare Sub-county.

Mr Magyezi said police also intercepted thieves with 65 stolen cows early this month. He said they are mostly taken to Kasese District and neighbouring countries such as Rwanda, Tanzania and DR Congo.

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