TIPS TO PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY

Report theft immediately
Pawn shops, second hand dealers, and junk dealers are required to hold property for a number of days before they can sell or dispose of it. Law enforcement has an opportunity to go to the shops to put on hold your property during that time.

Check property and equipment regularly
Thieves target pumps for copper wire, farm equipment for radiators and batteries, and filtration systems for stainless steel screens. If a pump is stripped of its copper wire, it may go unnoticed for months until water is needed. Check property and equipment even when it is not in use.

Obtain an Owner Applied Number (OAN)
The Office of the District Attorney provides OAN’s to identify farm equipment so it can later be identified if it is stolen. Call the Rural Crime Unit to schedule a time for your equipment to be stamped free of charge.

Lock and secure your property
Secure gas pumps, gas tanks, storage bins, and grain elevators with strong locks, sturdy padlocks with hardened steel hasps, or dead bolts with a one inch throw. Chemicals should be stored in locked areas.

Keep storage areas well lit, neat, and organized
This will help to keep track of equipment and discourage theft.

TO REPORT RURAL CRIME
Contact your
Local Police Department or
Sheriff’s Department

To obtain an OAN, contact the
Rural Crime Unit at the
Office of the District Attorney
County of Tulare
221 S. Mooney Blvd., Rm. 211
Visalia, CA 93291-4593
(559) 636-5410

RURAL CRIME PROGRAM
Office of the District Attorney
County of Tulare
**LAWs**

**Theft** - A person is guilty of a felony if he or she steals property worth more than $950, less than $950 is a misdemeanor. However, theft of crops or domestic fowl over $250 is a felony, and theft of any livestock is a felony.

**Vandalism** - A person is guilty of a felony if he or she defaces, damages, or destroys real or personal property, and causes more than $400 in damage, less than $400 is a misdemeanor.

**Trespass** - A person is guilty of a misdemeanor or infraction if he or she, without permission, enters cultivated land, land enclosed by a fence, or uncultivated and unfenced land with no trespass signs at the boundaries and at all roads and trails leading onto the property.

**Possession of Stolen Property** - A person is guilty of a felony or misdemeanor if he or she is knowingly in possession of stolen property.

Pawn shops, junk dealers, and second hand dealers must obtain identifying information from people who sell property to them. Transaction records must be kept on site, and are subject to inspection by law enforcement. The property must be retained for a number of days before it can be disposed of or sold.

**PROSECUTION**

The Office of the District Attorney has a designated attorney assigned to the prosecution of agricultural crime cases. The same prosecutor handles the case from beginning to end in what is known as vertical prosecution. This is important to our office, because it ensures that an attorney with specialized training and experience can handle these cases effectively. Our attorney communicates with the detectives who investigate the cases, reviews the police reports, and decides what charges to file. Then the attorney makes all court appearances on the cases, from the preliminary hearing conference and preliminary hearing to sentencing and restitution hearing.

Agricultural crimes include a wide variety of cases, from theft of crops, produce, livestock, and equipment, to trespass and metal theft. Metal theft has a huge impact on the community. Property is damaged as wire or metal are removed from working equipment. We prosecute the people who steal the metal to sell for scrap, as well as the unscrupulous buyers who fail to abide by the laws and knowingly purchase stolen property.

**BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS**

The Office of the District Attorney has a designated criminal investigator assigned to the investigation of agricultural crimes. This investigator works with local and state agencies in an effort to determine crime trends and share information. The investigator works closely with the dedicated deputy district attorney and local law enforcement to thoroughly investigate rural crimes. The Office of the District Attorney, County of Tulare issues the Owner Applied Numbers statewide.

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**A MESSAGE FROM DISTRICT ATTORNEY TIM WARD**

Success in the field of agriculture depends on variables such as weather, pest and disease control, and the availability of water. Crime should not be a factor a rancher or farmer must consider as well. However, thefts of farm implements, metal, livestock, and crops are a reality and challenge for our agricultural community.

The impact of agricultural crime is far reaching in its consequences. Nearly 50% of Tulare County’s acres are under cultivation and 60% of our residents rely on agriculture for their livelihood. Our county is the second largest producer of agricultural commodities in the nation. We not only feed the United States, but the world. With the annual production of more than five billion dollars in nut and fruit crops, livestock, and dairy, these goods are a crime target as well. This puts into perspective the importance of safeguarding and protecting this critical industry.

The Office of the District Attorney, County of Tulare is committed to preventing, solving, and prosecuting agricultural crime. With a dedicated prosecutor and a criminal investigator assigned to our Rural Crime Unit, we are working tirelessly to aggressively prosecute criminals who target our vital industry. Preventing crime is of utmost importance. We work with farmers, ranchers, and dairy owners to “harden the target,” making their unguarded land, crops, equipment, and animals more resistant to opportunistic criminals.

Rural crime will not be tolerated in our community. We have too much to lose to risk letting crime become a variable that must be factored into the cost of doing business. The Office of the District Attorney, County of Tulare is combating agricultural crime with technology, manpower, education, and prosecution of criminals.