

Encouraging successes achieved in tackling stock theft

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Free State Agriculture (FSA), in collaboration with LGV's PSiRA-registered Private Stock Theft Investigators, has retrieved more than a million rands' worth of livestock since FSA announced its Private Livestock Theft Investigators initiative four months ago. Fourteen arrests in six cases of stock theft followed.



According to Jakkals le Roux, 241 sheep and 98 cattle worth R1,5 million were recovered. Four vehicles and one trailer were seized. These are three of the many successes that FSA and the Private Stock Theft Investigators initiative have achieved in their first four months.

Le Roux said the initiative flowed from the ever-increasing incidences of stock theft in the province. “We realised that a community-based initiative was going to be needed to help turn things around. The Private Livestock Theft Investigators are made up of PSiRA-registered private investigators who focus on livestock theft. They currently operate under the leadership of Free State Agriculture and the private security company LGV in the Fezile Dabe district.”

FSA president Francois Wilken previously told *Farmer's Weekly* that livestock producers suffered astronomical financial losses every year as a result of organised

livestock theft. The situation was exacerbated by the SAPS's limited ability and capacity to combat crime in the province.

"In the Free State, this is particularly true as far as the investigation of stock, arrests and successes in court are concerned. The fact that the SAPS's Livestock Theft Units suffer from a lack of manpower, vehicles and equipment, is a major concern. The damage caused by the criminals amounts to millions of rand every year," he said.

Fezile Dabe covers an area of about 20 668km², stretching from Steynsrus to Sasolburg and from Viljoenskroon to Frankfort. During the past three months, valuable information has been gathered on the movement and relocation of suspected stolen stock, especially in the cross-border area with Gauteng.

Le Roux added that private investigators were being deployed in a number of Free State towns, especially those near or along the Lesotho border. He announced that 24 inquiry dossiers and 26 actual cases related to the activities of certain groups and syndicates were being investigated.