

Center-pivot companies address theft of copper

By FPS STAFF

What's New from the shows

ONE of the worst-kept secrets in farm country today is that the wire cables that run along the irrigation pipe on many center pivot units contain copper. Thieves figured that out as the price of copper rose and have been creating

havoc from western Nebraska to Michigan to central Indiana. What some producers wanted to keep quiet when it first started happening, so as to not encourage others to figure it out, has turned into a near epidemic.

Irrigation manufacturers are responding in their own ways.

Some are offering clamps to deter theft. Others offer clamps and alarms. One company, T-L Irrigation, doesn't use copper wiring, opting for hydraulics instead. Here's a look at just a few of the ways companies are encouraging producers to help reduce their odds for having their pivots hit by copper thieves.

Deter copper theft

Installing new Copper Cuffs from Zimmatic won't eliminate copper theft, but company spokespeople say it should slow them down. Most thieves want a unit where they can pull the wire quickly and be gone. Each cuff bolts around the water pipe and electric cable. Reflective strips on the bottom of the cuff signals flashlight-toting thieves this unit won't be an easy target. List price is \$75 per span.

■ Call Zimmatic, Omaha, Neb., at 800-829-5300 or visit www.zimmatic.com.



To stop a thief

Valmont's answer to protecting irrigation pivots with copper wiring from thieves is twofold. Sara Sims, marketing manager, says the company now offers clamps that circle the pipe. They should slow down would-be thieves. Second, Valmont now offers an alarm system. If the connection is broken, such as if wires are pulled, the alarm unit dials a phone to alert someone that contact has been broken.



■ Call Valmont Irrigation, Valley, Neb., at 402-359-2201, ext. 3415, or visit www.valmont.com/irrigation.

Burglary becomes a big deal

By TOM J. BECHMAN

ONE year ago, dark-of-the-night intruders targeted northern Indiana irrigators.

A copper thief pulls out the machine's long electrical cable. Some estimates place value of the copper at \$1,000 per pivot. However, replacing it cost \$4,000 to \$5,000 — even more if thieves damage key components.

A farmer with several pivots suggested keeping the story quiet, hoping it would go away. Well, the "mum's the word" approach failed. This summer thieves expanded into southern Indiana.

Copper theft has reached epidemic proportions in big irrigation states, such as Nebraska. All four major irrigation equipment makers have responded with ideas for deterring copper theft.

Copper thieves, beware

Expect an alert signal if copper thieves try to strike a Reinke pivot equipped with On Trac. If the cable is cut, representatives say messages will be sent to pre-programmed sources. Notifying you of an emergency is only one function of this satellite-based technology. Advanced models of On Trac let you run your irrigation systems by remote control. It also features extensive recordkeeping on all tracked data.

■ Call 866-365-7381 or visit www.reinke.com.

