

NewsWatch

Farmers on guard

By BILL SPIEGEL

THE Case 930 tractor Sam Goodale had planned to restore and give to his grandchildren is gone. So is the vintage Chevrolet grain truck his father bought new and the Allis-Chalmers 8070 tractor Goodale used to farm.

All three were stolen from a barn in remote Cheyenne County and sold to a salvage yard, where they were chopped up for scrap metal.

The crime — which occurred in October 2006 — still gnaws at Goodale.

"Depression and aggravation sets in after a while," he says. "It's just disappointing. I worked hard all my life, and just had everything taken away."

Increasing trend

Though no state agency keeps track, it appears as if crimes against farmers are on the rise. Whether it is cattle being rustled or injured, equipment being

Key Points

- A St. Francis farmer lost two tractors and a truck to theft.
- The thieves were local kids who sold the machinery to scrap yards.
- Often, the punishment is not severe enough to thwart crimes.

stolen or vandalized, or buildings being burglarized or vandalized, scarcely a week passes without an incident mentioned in the local newspaper or on the news.

In the past year alone, vandals shot and killed six cattle in Pratt County. In Wichita County, a tractor, planter and corn seed were stolen prior to spring planting. Also in Wichita and Lane counties, several four-wheel-drive tractors were stolen. Along the Kansas River Valley in eastern Kansas, thieves took copper wire from center-pivot irrigation



DISGUSTED: Sam Goodale, St. Francis, had planned on giving a near-pristine Case 930 tractor to his grandchildren someday. However, two locals stole the Case, an Allis-Chalmers and a vintage Chevrolet truck, selling the goods to a scrap yard in Colorado. All three vehicles were full of fuel and sitting in a shed several miles from Goodale's residence when they were taken.

systems. And throughout Kansas, the Kansas Livestock Association frequently reports instances of cattle rustling and theft of livestock pharmaceuticals.

Perhaps it's not surprising, given the vast openness of rural Kansas and barebones law enforcement coverage.

"We've got two law enforcement officers covering 1,035 square miles," says Cheyenne County Sheriff Craig Van Allen. "Everyone would like 24-hour-per-day coverage, but I don't think that's feasible."

Prevention efforts

In 2007, the Kansas Legislature passed a law that requires salvage yards throughout the state to obtain a name, address and written description of items brought to them. The hope is this will help prevent disposal of stolen property by thieves looking for a quick source of cash.

The law would do little to help Goodale, however: His goods were transported to Denver, where the thieves "made" less than \$1,000.

In Goodale's case, the thieves were

two local kids, who apparently committed the crime for fun.

"I've known these kids all my life," he says. "That's what's really disappointing."

Does the punishment fit?

Furthermore, the penalties thieves pay for their actions are often minimal.

Goodale's belongings were valued at about \$35,000. The St. Francis youths responsible for the crime also were connected to thefts of farm machinery in Wallace and Sherman counties and have been convicted of a low-level felony theft. During a hearing earlier this fall, the pair were ordered to pay restitution to Goodale. They also will serve a short jail sentence, followed by probation.

In the meantime, however, those who took Goodale's property are roaming free. And Goodale, who has since put his land into the Conservation Reserve Program, has yet to receive restitution from one of the culprits.

"They have no reason to want money; they just did it for the thrill," Sheriff Van Allen says.

Take time for steps that prevent theft

If a thief wants something bad enough, chances are he or she will probably get it. But there are a few things you can do to protect yourself, says Craig Van Allen, Cheyenne County sheriff.

- Keep your eyes open. If something appears to be amiss, report it. Also, keep your eyes open on your neighbor's behalf. "We're losing our sense of community and caring about each other," Van Allen says. "Watch each other."

- Lock vehicles and buildings. One burglary victim in northwest Kansas hung a lock on the door to make it look as if the building was locked, but it wasn't. Lock the building — that may be enough to make a burglar look elsewhere.

- Disable tractors. One west-central Kansas farmer sought advice from a service technician at his dealership on how to prevent a tractor from being started, even with a key. It takes a few minutes but will prevent theft, reckons the technician.

- Keep insurance up-to-date. Annual premiums may appear to be expensive, but adequate insurance can help make a farmer "whole" in the event of a theft or other disaster.

Kansas Clippings

Kansas Farm Bureau presents awards at annual meeting

Gary Kilgore, Chanute, received Kansas Farm Bureau's Distinguished Service to Agriculture award at the KFB annual convention last month in Manhattan. Kilgore, retired agronomist for Kansas State University's southeast area, gave advice to farmers and ranchers for more than 30 years. Also at the annual meeting, Riley County farmers **Greg and Melinda Sinn** earned KFB's Natural Resources Award for their holistic approach to farming, raising cattle and operating a swine farrow-to-finish program.



CONGRATULATIONS, KILGORE: Gary Kilgore (left) received the Kansas Farm Bureau's Distinguished Service to Agriculture award from KFB President Steve Baccus last month. Kilgore retired earlier this year from the southeast area agronomist post for K-State Research and Extension. Courtesy Kansas Farm Bureau

Movers and shakers

Rebecca Bandli is horticulture agent at the Sedgwick County Research and Extension office in Wichita. She is a graduate from Iowa State University. ... **Brittany Nichapor** has been named County Extension director for the Trego County Research and Extension office. She previously worked for K-State's Department of Animal Science. ... **David Corliss**, Lawrence, has been named by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius to the Kansas Water Authority, which reviews plans for development, management and use of the state's water resources.

KDWP offers funding for wildlife habitat development

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is taking applications for a share of \$90,000 in Landowner Incentive Program funding, which landowners must use to develop wildlife habitat. The

KDWP is limiting eligibility to privately owned land west of the Flint Hills. Landowners must contribute to the enhancement of at least one priority species or habitat; they also must agree to contribute at least 25% to the project. Applications are due Jan. 31. More information is available by calling the LIP program coordinator at KDWP at 620-672-5911.

KFB honors young producers

Three awards were announced at last month's Kansas Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers competitions. **David and Stacey Forshee**, Delphos, earned the YF&R Achievement Award; **Sarah Sexton**, Manhattan, won the Discussion Meet; and **Dana Pieper**, Palco, won the Achievement Award. These folks will compete at the American Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting in January.