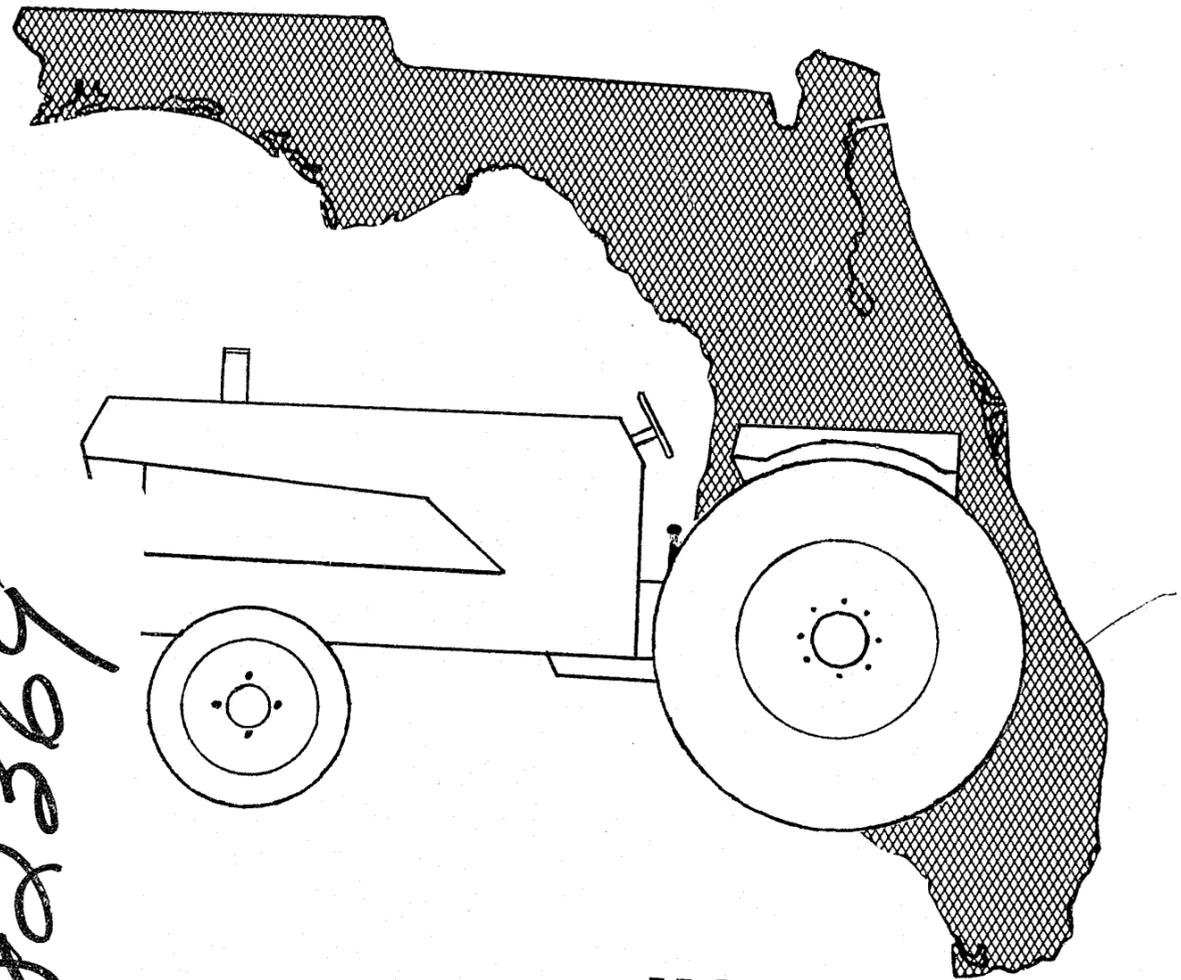


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Discussion Leader's Guide

AGRICULTURAL CRIME PREVENTION



82369

HELP
STOP CRIME

Office of the Attorney General

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National Institute of Justice

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FOREWORD

From the Attorney General

The crime rate in Florida's rural areas is rising faster than the metropolitan and suburban communities. Until now, little has been done to educate the agricultural community on various methods they can use to combat crime. In response to this need, in 1979, HELP STOP CRIME! began addressing these crime problems through the development of an agricultural crime prevention program.

The program places major emphasis on crimes against property; i.e, livestock, crops and equipment. The primary objectives of the program are:

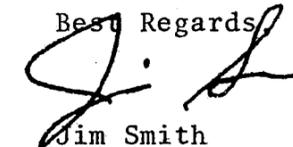
- * To publicize the magnitude of agricultural crimes.
- * To inform the agricultural community on specific measures they can use to reduce their vulnerability to crime.
- * To encourage the reporting of all crimes, attempted crimes, and suspicious activities.

This manual has been designed to serve as a speaker's guide for the crime prevention practitioner implementing agricultural crime prevention programs. The full educational package will include: brochures, posters, audio-visual materials, marking kits, newspaper print ads, and radio/tv public service announcements.

It is our hope that you will use this guide as a supplement to local problems and solutions as related to your community.

I commend your wholehearted dedication to this job and wish you every success in carrying it out. Good luck!

Best Regards,



Jim Smith

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HELP STOP CRIME! owes a debt of gratitude to the many people who assisted in the preparation of this Discussion Leader's Guide on Agricultural Crimes. Without their valuable input, the task of putting together this guide would not have been possible.

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the bloodline of Florida's economy. The state's economic well-being, to a large degree, prospers or suffers in direct relationship to the conditions and growth of this vital industry.

To broaden your understanding of just how important agriculture is to Florida, here are a few pertinent facts:

- * Agriculture is Florida's number one industry and is worth over \$12 billion to the state's economy.
- * This industry is ranked first in the southeast for agricultural sales and ranked 11th nationally.
- * In 1980, there were 44,165 farms that consist of over 13.4 billion acres.
- * Over half of Florida is categorized as farmland.
- * This industry employs more than one fourth of the state's work force.
- * The six largest agricultural counties are: Dade, Hillsborough, Lake, Orange, Palm Beach and Polk.
- * The state has three distinct agricultural regions:
 - North - general farming
 - Central - citrus
 - South - sugar cane, winter vegetables and tropical fruit.
- * Cattle and dairy farming extends over the entire state.

The agricultural community must deal with many variables which are out of their control, such as weather conditions, the economy and labor costs. These factors weigh heavily upon a farmer. Now there is another variable that can no longer be ignored -- it is crime.

For years, crime has been a fact of life for the city dweller, while the rural areas had remained practically untouched. Unfortunately, this is no longer true. Crime is becoming a bigger threat each year for the agricultural community.

Agricultural crime is defined as:

The act of trespassing, theft or destruction of any agricultural land, commodity, production requisites, equipment and structure (excluding residential) that is used in the production, harvesting and sale of agricultural products.

DLN: This definition will be used for this program. The official definition as outlined by the UCR is: Any willful or malicious act committed by any individual(s) which results in damage to or loss of livestock, crops, land, materials, equipment or structures used in or produces as a result of any agricultural practice, excluding commercial agricultural businesses not owned by the producer.

Larceny, vandalism and trespassing are the most frequently committed crimes.

The following sections have been designed to give you, the crime prevention practitioner, a general insight and overview of the crime problems plaguing Florida's agricultural industry.

THE CRIME PROBLEM

The Crimes

In a 1978 Tri-County Agricultural Crime Survey conducted by the Central Florida Regional Planning Council, larceny and vandalism were the two most reported crimes. Of 477 reported crimes in a three county area (Desoto, Highlands and Hardee) from October 1977 to September 1978, larceny accounted for 223 crimes; vandalism was reported 105 times. Trespassing was the third most reported crime with 71 incidences. Keep in mind that these are reported crimes and reflects only a minority of actual offenses. Seventy to seventy-two percent of all agricultural crimes go unreported.

The Florida Farm Bureau conservatively estimates that the rural areas in Florida lose \$21 million in property a year. In addition, the citrus industry suffers losses estimated at \$9 million per season, according to Florida Citrus Mutual.

Thieves and vandals will steal or destroy any and everything they can get their hands on; e.g., livestock, crops, equipment, supplies and tools. Tires, batteries, chemicals and fuel appear to be the most frequently stolen. By watching the commodities market and price indexes, authorities can closely predict what item(s) will be the "target" of thefts, i.e., if chemical prices rise, so will chemical thefts.

Larceny and vandalism appear to go hand-in-hand. Often if the would-be thieves can not steal it, some will try to destroy it. The willful and malicious destruction of property is extremely costly and time consuming for farmers. According to the 1978 Tri-County Agricultural Crime Survey, the 105

reported vandalism cases amounted to \$21,319 in damages.

Vandalism is difficult to control and has various causes: anger, frustration, revenge, retaliation, fun, etc. Agricultural leaders and law enforcement officials estimate that over 50% of all vandals are juveniles looking for some excitement.

The illegal dumping of trash is also a form of vandalism. Dumping trash and other debris is a nuisance and added work for the farmer. Trash in pastures, groves and fields can be hazardous; glass or metal can severely cut tires, people, animals and dull/break machinery.

Joy riding on machinery is another problem. In many cases, the ride will end up with the destruction of equipment, fences, mailboxes and structures.

Other targets of vandalism include: pretzeling or running over irrigation equipment; knocking over/shooting mailboxes, signs, fences and gates; tearing up trees and crops; burning hay.

Trespassing is a big problem for the agricultural community. This crime is often overlooked and considered nothing but a petty offense. A person is guilty of trespassing when he enters on to land that is posted*, fenced* or cultivated*, without the permission of the owner. Trespassing is a menace and unfortunately most people do not consider it a crime. If controlled, there would probably be fewer incidents of larceny and vandalism committed.

DLN: According to F.S. 810.08/.09 - trespassing in a structure or conveyance is a 2nd degree misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment not exceeding 60 days and/or a \$500 fine. Trespassing while a person is in structure or conveyance is a first degree misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment not exceeding one year and/or \$1,000 fine. Trespassing on property

**Definitions are in the appendix.*

other than structures and conveyance is a first degree misdemeanor, punishable as stated previously. Trespassing with a firearm or other dangerous weapon is a third degree felony, punishable by imprisonment not exceeding five years and/or \$5,000 fine.

Agricultural crime is a collective problem. When a crime is committed against the farmer, he is forced to absorb the cost. This business can not pass its additional cost on to the consumer the way the other industries can because the farmers have to deal with the commodity market which controls the prices. Agricultural crime affects everyone by forcing farmers out of business because of additional costs and by creating shortages which cause price increases. Farmers not only suffer the direct monetary losses, but lost man hours, production time, equipment downtime, higher insurance rates and other related costs.

The Perpetrators

Who are the thieves? They are professionals, organized crime rings, employees and amateurs.

The "pro" steals for a living. He knows what to steal and how to do it without being noticed. Law enforcement believes that the "pros" or organized crime rings are responsible for a majority of the heavy equipment thefts and large quantity of products, materials and livestock thefts. These thieves are capable of causing tremendous monetary losses to farmers. Many pros and rings operate through the black market and will have a buyer lined up before stealing the property. In other words, these thieves will "shop around" for a specific item, especially heavy equipment. The pro is difficult to catch, he will cover his tracks and usually disposes of the property within hours

after stealing it. Often, he will dismantle the equipment and/or ship it out of the county, state or country.

Employee theft is another problem. It is the larger businesses that have more than a couple of employees, who are hardest hit by this kind of thief. Employees are in a position that makes it easier for them to steal. They know the employer's business operation and habits. Tools and small quantities of materials and products are the most likely targets of employee theft.

In most cases, the amateur thief does not create serious and tremendous losses for the farmer. He usually steals for personal use or for extra cash, and he does not make a living at it. The smaller, more portable items and materials are more desirable to this thief. Amateurs have been known to take a few cattle and small quantities of products; but for the most part, they are more of a nuisance than a big threat to the farmer.

Contributing Factors

Some sociologists and agricultural authorities attribute the increase in rural crime to:

- * modern technology that has made society more mobile and the rural areas more accessible; e.g., motor vehicles, planes and boats.
- * migration away from the fast moving cities to the slower, more relaxed rural areas. Our countryside is becoming the "bedroom" of the urban workers.

These are only two of many sociological factors that contribute to this rise in rural crime.

DLN: In 1979, rural areas experienced a 19% increase in crime over the previous year; while in the metro and suburban areas crime increased 10-12% from the previous year. Source: 1979 FDLE UCR Crime in Florida Report.

HELP STOP CRIME!'s Agricultural Crime Prevention Ad Hoc Committee has identified six factors that contribute to agricultural crime:

1. LACK OF PROPER IDENTIFICATION AND INVENTORY:

Marking and identifying all property is essential if the owner wants to recover the property. It also strengthens the prosecution's case. In addition to marking the property it is good management to maintain accurate inventory records. Inventory of all property should be conducted periodically. OPERATION IDENTIFICATION is the answer, and it has been proven to be an effective crime deterrent. (See OPERATION IDENTIFICATION section)

2. POOR CRIME REPORTING RATE:

Getting the agricultural community to report crimes has been a tremendous problem for officials. Estimates are that only 28-30% of all agricultural crimes are reported to law enforcement; the recovery rate of reported crimes is less than 10%. Too often, the farmer feels that there is little that can be done to recover the loss, so why report it. Many feel that the loss is not significant enough to spend their time going through the justice system. Another problem with reporting is that the farmer may not discover the property loss for a day, week, or month. The reason for this is that a lot of the equipment is seasonal and not used daily, and equipment storage areas and pastures are isolated. Some farmers may feel intimidated by law enforcement because they can not answer the officer's questions and may not know what day or time period the crime occurred, and therefore are less likely to report it. Another reason could be the fear of retaliation by the thieves or vandals who may be prosecuted as a result of a complaint made to law enforcement agencies.

DLN: Reporting any crimes or suspicious activities is extremely important and needs to be reinforced in the rural community.

3. POOR COMMUNICATION BETWEEN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY:

The lack of communication creates misunderstanding and lost contact, which will make a law enforcement officer's job twice as difficult. Law enforcement can not combat crime without the help of the community. Since most law enforcement agencies are more reactive than a proactive agency, the crime must be reported. Local law enforcement is only as efficient and effective as the citizens in the community, who act as their eyes and ears.

4. INSUFFICIENT NUMBER OF TRAINED PERSONNEL PATROLLING THE RURAL AREA:

The communication problem is complicated by the inadequate number of law enforcement officers patrolling the rural areas. The lack of funds is the major factor for the low number of officers. Because the number of personnel and funds are often inadequate, it becomes the primary responsibility of the community to protect their property and inform the law. Many sheriff's departments have implemented special agricultural crime investigators who have been trained to handle the crime cases.

5. RURAL AREAS ARE ISOLATED:

Unlike the physical protection measures available to other businesses, agricultural land provides a natural cover for the criminal. The agricultural community is spread out, and neighbors can be anywhere from a mile to ten miles away. In addition, equipment and livestock are often kept out of sight of the residence where no one can keep an eye on them.

6. EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS ARE COSTLY AND IN DEMAND:

The high prices of farm machinery and supplies make them very desirable to thieves. The demands for them are constant, and the thief knows that he will be able to sell the stolen property at a good price. The agricultural community actually reinforces crime by their willingness to buy, especially at low costs. Farmers should be suspicious of individuals who are willing to sell them equipment and materials for a low price -- it could indicate that the property is stolen. The farmer should contact law enforcement if he is approached by persons selling property at suspiciously low prices. The best thing to do is to deal with an established business.

DLN: *The next sections will discuss crime problems and preventive steps that can be taken. Before talking about these sections, you may want to explain what crime prevention is; i.e., make the thief create more noise, take more time and increase his visibility. In addition you may want to point out the three elements that must be present to commit a crime: desire, opportunity, and ability.*

LIVESTOCK

Cattle and horses are the most frequently stolen livestock in Florida. The thefts of these two types of animals are lucrative for the criminal. For instance, the 1980 average cost of a cow was \$620; a steer - \$600; and a bull could cost as much as \$30,000 or more. The price of horses can begin around \$400 to \$500 and increase depending upon the breed. The rustler can easily make thousands of dollars in one day's or night's work.

Isolated pastures and feedlots, unmarked animals, poor fencing, unlocked gates, corrals and loading chutes, easy road accessibility, and absent owners are conditions thieves look for. A thief may spend countless hours observing his "target" which he can accomplish by foot, car/truck, small planes or boats. Before the criminal strikes, he will probably know the property and working habits of the owner and employees.

The methods are as varied as the thieves themselves. The most common techniques involve the use of motor vehicles, dogs and horses to round-up the livestock. Rustlers have been known to drive into a field, turn on their lights and wait for the cattle to come to them. Others have used tranquilizer guns to sedate the animals before carrying them off. Another practice has been killing and actually quartering the animals in the pastures, leaving the unwanted parts behind. Many use horses to round-up the livestock and herd them to a trailer or truck. Some horse thieves have been blatant enough to ride the horse out of the pasture and down the road. In some

cases, the farmer has actually aided the thieves by leaving his corrals and loading chutes unlocked, allowing the thieves to use them.

Livestock markets are another place that livestock is vulnerable to theft. One livestock owner had a calf stolen from the time he checked the animal in to the time of the sale. Later, he found out that a market employee had switched owner tags and put a friend's tag on the calf. According to many agricultural authorities, this happens often.

PENALTY: Under F.S. 812.014 - stealing livestock is grand theft of the second degree and a felony of the third degree, punishable by imprisonment not exceeding five years and/or \$5,000 fine.

The malicious destruction or harassment of livestock by people and other animals is a serious problem. Livestock have been used as shooting targets and left fatally wounded or maimed. Animals have been poisoned or have had their necks and legs broken. Livestock have been chased by motor vehicles until they die from exhaustion or hurt themselves.

Livestock have been threatened by other animals, such as dogs. Dogs have been known to kill a large cow or steer without much difficulty. They attack chickens and other farm animals, causing the farmer many problems.

Trying to control abandoned, strayed and loose neighborhood dogs is a nuisance and a frustrating situation. Dogs attacking and maiming or killing animals is becoming more prevalent in the rural areas.

PENALTY: F.S. 767 covers damage caused by dogs. The owners of dogs are liable for any damage done by their dogs to sheep or other domestic animals or livestock or persons. F.S. 767.03 "Good defense for killing dogs" clears anyone from damages or criminal prosecution for killing or injuring a dog, if satisfactory proof that the dog has been or was killing cattle or sheep. F.S. makes any owner of a dog that kills, wounds or harasses any dairy cattle liable to the cattle owner for all damages done by the dog.

DLN: A dog can be "man's best friend" and is a natural burglar alarm. Many times, thieves will stay clear of property that has dogs who will warn their masters of any intruders. However, one thief admits that the best time to steal from a farmer who has dogs is around dusk. Because the farmer may be relaxing or eating, he will ignore the dogs. While at other times, the farmer may check out why the dogs are barking.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

MARK LIVESTOCK: Mark or brand all livestock soon after birth or purchase. Unmarked animals are impossible to recover, while marked animals can be traced back to the owner. Brands/marks are prima facie evidence of ownership if properly registered. All markings should be clear and concise. It is important for farmers to register their markings with the Department of Agriculture's Marks/Brands Unit. Always mark the livestock according to your registration certificate. Various marking methods include: Branding, tattooing, marks and tags. Brands and tattoos are more reliable methods; ear tags and marks are easier to alter. Post signs warning people that your livestock and property are marked and can be traced back to the owner. (See OPERATION IDENTIFICATION Section)

DLN: The lack of identifying marks or brands is a tremendous problem. Without the proper marks it is almost impossible for law enforcement to find the owner, and it makes it more difficult to prosecute the criminal. Rustlers have admitted that they do not like to fool around with marked animals and that their chances of finding unmarked livestock is excellent.

*Definitions are in the appendix.

*CHECK LIVESTOCK: Count your animals daily, when possible. Otherwise do it frequently, at least two or three times a week. Always keep your animals on your own property. Avoid regular and routine schedules when checking on the livestock. When away, make arrangements with a neighbor to check your animals.

*USE GATES AND FENCING: Good fences and locked gates will keep animals from straying and act as a stumbling block for rustlers. Use heavy duty 3/8 inch chains to block off roads without gates and to keep gates locked. A case hardened steel padlock with a heel-toe locking mechanism is the best. Keep a list of the serial numbers for the padlocks, then file the number off the lock. This will keep someone from taking the serial number to a locksmith and having a duplicate key made. Keep loading chutes, corrals and other areas where livestock may be locked. If loading chutes do not have a gate, string a 3/8 inch chain across the opening and secure it with a case hardened padlock. Fences should be at least three to four feet high and kept in good repair. For added protection, place loading chutes and corrals near the residence or a neighbor who can keep an eye on them.

*REPORT MISSING ANIMALS: Notify law enforcement immediately when you discover a missing animal, even if you may suspect that it has strayed. In addition, always contact law enforcement when you see any suspicious activities, people or crimes. Be the "eyes and ears" of the law.

*CHECK EMPLOYEES: Have prospective employees complete an employment application. Check the references and background of all potential employees--it could be worth the extra time.

*DEAL WITH ESTABLISHED BUSINESSES: Buy from a reputable seller. Know who you are buying livestock and materials from. Do not support the black market.

DLN: Florida Cattlemen's Association has a reward of up to \$1,000 for the arrest and conviction of persons who rustle cattle from association members.

Wildlife Alert Program, sponsored by the Florida Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission, offers a reward upon the arrest of individuals that have violated Florida Statutes protecting wildlife and fresh water fish. When endangered species are involved, a reward will be given upon the arrest and conviction of the violator(s). Rewards vary depending upon the type of violation. Persons who see a crime occur or suspicious activities involving wildlife and fresh water fish should contact their regional commission field office.

COMMODITIES

Florida's citrus industry is the largest agricultural enterprise in the state. More than half of the world's grapefruit and one-fourth of the world's oranges are produced in this state.

Florida is the second largest fresh vegetable producing state; California is ranked first. In 1978, Florida's farmers ranked number one in the production of snap beans, cabbage, tomatoes, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, escarole, green peppers and watermelons.

Honey is another big industry in Florida. West Florida is widely recognized for its rare tupelo honey. In 1978, Florida bees produced over 23,000,000 pounds of honey, ranking second in the United States for its value and production.

Few individuals are aware of the losses that theft and vandalism inflict on these industries. Halfway through the 1979-80 season, the Florida Citrus Mutual estimated that the theft and vandalism of citrus cost the industry approximately \$9 million or about \$11 dollars per acre.

During the 1979 season, Dade County farmers lost an estimated one million dollars in avocados, limes and mangoes to thieves. Other theft problems plaguing the agricultural industry include the stealing of tires, chemicals, gas, equipment, tools, plants, beehives and trees.

Vandals have been responsible for throwing trash in the groves and fields. Also they destroy and damage tractors, expensive irrigation equipment, fences and tear or mar trees and

plants. Vandals have been known to knock over beehives, causing the bees to go into a frenzy.

PENALTY: The theft of citrus is covered under F.S. 812.014. An offender is guilty of grand theft of the second degree and a felony of the third degree if he steals 2,000 or more pieces, or \$100 or more, in fruit. All other thefts to crops are covered under F.S. 812.013 and are handled as petit theft punishable under F.S. 775.082/.083.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

*MARK PROPERTY: Mark your crops, grains and baled commodities by packing them with numbered non-toxic confetti or tabs. The confetti and tabs are easily removed. (Confetti and tabs are available through the Farm Bureau) Mark all beehives, containers and crates with the owner's number or name. Mark trees with regular or phosphorescent paint. For added protection and identification of valuable trees, keep a list that shows the diameter, height and type of the trees. This is done by measuring the diameter of the tree at four and a half feet from the ground; to determine height, measure the height to the first large branch. Paint or brand tires. Post signs advertising that commodities are marked. (See OPERATION IDENTIFICATION Section)

*USE GATES AND FENCING: When it is feasible, fence in your property. Fences should be at least three to four feet high and kept in good repair. Use heavy duty 3/8 inch chains to block off roads without gates and to keep gates locked. Use case hardened steel padlocks with a heel-toe locking mechanism. Write down all of the padlock serial numbers and then file them off. This will prevent someone from getting the serial number and taking it to a locksmith to get a duplicate key made.

*USE LIGHTING: Good lighting increases visibility. Light up equipment, crop storage areas, irrigation, and pump sheds.

*KEEP GROVES/FIELDS CLEAN: Leaving harvested crops in the field or grove is bad business. Store them in a well secured and lighted building or area that is patrolled. Always check property regularly. A well kept grove and field lets the owner know whether or not someone has trespassed. Growers may want to hire security guards to patrol property. (See appendix for guidelines)

*DEAL WITH LEGITIMATE SELLERS: When buying crops and supplies, know who you are buying from. It is best to deal with an established business. Be careful when buying materials and equipment for a lower than normal price, it could be stolen.

*CONTACT LAW ENFORCEMENT: Report any thefts, vandalisms or suspicious activities to law enforcement. Notify them when you will be out of town or need some extra security, i.e., when leaving any harvesting or production equipment or fuel tanks in the field, so that they will be more alert and cautious when patrolling your property.

DLN: *The Florida Citrus Mutual offers a \$200 reward for information pertaining to a criminal act committed against a member's property. Developing rewards for information about criminal acts is well worth the money.*

EQUIPMENT

Modern machines and equipment have helped to lighten the burden of the farming community; hence modern technology has become an essential part of farming. Because the prices of the farming equipment are high, the average farm has over \$100,000 invested in equipment. For example, a multi-purpose tractor can cost anywhere from \$10,000 to \$60,000 and up depending upon its features and conditions. The high cost of farm equipment makes it very desirable to thieves. The smaller and more portable equipment is stolen more regularly than heavier equipment. Generally, when heavy equipment is stolen, the thieves are professionals or organized crime rings.

DLN: In April, 1980, Florida Panhandle law enforcement authorities arrested individuals involved in a tri-state (Florida, Georgia and Alabama) heavy equipment theft ring. Authorities recovered \$184,000 in stolen farm and construction equipment from this ring.

Often, heavy equipment will be shipped out of the state or country by these pros, which makes it almost impossible to trace. Many pros and rings will steal on a "as needed" basis, stealing equipment that a "customer" has requested.

Vandalism is becoming an increasing problem to equipment owners. Vandals have been known to put sugar or sand in gas tanks, take joy rides on the equipment and to play on, dismantle or destroy the machines.

PENALTY: According to F.S. 812.014, if property stolen is valued at \$100 or more and less than \$20,000 it is grand theft of the second degree and a felony of the third degree punishable by a term of imprisonment not exceeding five years and/or \$5,000 fine.

Stolen property exceeding \$20,000 is grand theft of the first degree, and a felony of the second degree, punishable with imprisonment up to 15 years and/or \$10,000 fine.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

***MARK EQUIPMENT:** Engrave all of your equipment and tools.

Identify any supplies and chemicals you use. Mark your equipment with an owner's ID number in more than one place. Paint or brand items that are difficult to engrave; i.e., tires, pipes. Advertise that all property is marked and can be traced back to owner. Maintain accurate inventory records. (See OPERATION IDENTIFICATION Section)

***SECURE EQUIPMENT AND TOOLS:** Store equipment and tools in a well secured and lighted area or building. The building should have solid core wood or steel doors on the exterior exits. The doors should be secured with dead bolts, windows should have good locks. Use a heavy duty padlock to lock gas pumps and tanks. Dismantle and/or chain together equipment that must be left outside. Use 3/8 inch chain and padlocks (heel-toe lock) to chain equipment together or to a stationary object. It is not wise to leave equipment in the fields. Try to bring it in or leave it where someone could keep an eye on it. If the equipment will be left in an isolated place, it is best to make it inoperable. Remove the battery or distributor cap and rotor. Install hidden ignition-kill switches. Always take the keys with you, do not hide them on the equipment. Use lock gas caps. Notify law enforcement about equipment left in fields, so that extra precautionary measures can be taken. Always lock your vehicles. Do not leave guns or tools in the back of an open truck or car. Store tools and small equipment you have in the truck or car in a locked tool box.

***USE LIGHTING:** Light up areas around the residence, barns, sheds and equipment areas.

***CONTACT LAW ENFORCEMENT:** Report any stolen or missing equipment immediately. Notify law enforcement about any suspicious activity or persons.

OPERATION IDENTIFICATION

Operation Identification (OI) is a pioneer crime prevention program. It has been in effect since 1963 in many parts of the country, and has proven to be a viable crime deterrent. The OI Program is two-fold:

1. Marking all valuables with an owner identification number.
2. Posting signs advertising that all valuables have been marked and can be traced back to the owner.

The philosophy behind this concept is that marked property is more difficult for the burglar to dispose of, and that it can be traced back to the owner. In addition, marked property constitutes solid evidence of the possession of stolen property.

Currently, there are a variety of numbers being used to identify owners. The most widely used numbering systems are the driver's license and the NCIC-ORI (National Crime Information Center-Originating Agency Identifier).

The driver's license number consists of 12 alpha-numeric characters. When using it as an owner identification number, it is necessary to add "FL" and "DL" to identify it as a Florida driver's license number:

FLD123-456-78-910DL

D	123	456	78	910
Last name initial	Code for surname	Code for first name/ middle initial	Birth Year	Birth Date/Sex

Citizens who are not a driver and are over 18 years of age can get a Department of Motor Vehicles I.D. card from any Florida Driver's License Station. This I.D. card will have the same alphanumeric code number for the purposes of identification as a driver's license. This is then coded into the Motor Vehicles' computer for information retrieval in the event that marked stolen property is recovered by law enforcement.

The NCIC-ORI (National Crime Information Center - Originating Agency Identifier) numbering system (also referred to as the Iowa System or American Farm Bureau number) is recommended by the American Farm Bureau and the Florida Farm Bureau. This system is an attempt to develop a standard numbering system that can be implemented nationwide. In 1977, the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Advisory Board adopted a recommendation from the Operation Identification Task Force to expand its present stolen article format to include a new searchable field for owner-applied identification numbers, plus expand the miscellaneous field for reasons stated above. This recommendation required the NCIC to expand existing stolen vehicle record's miscellaneous field and insert a new field for an owner-applied identification number. The NCIC-ORI has already been implemented in many of Florida's counties with minimal required effort and expense. This number consists of ten (10) characters: The first two identify the state; the third through fifth identify the county; and the remaining five identify the owner. The first five characters are designated by the NCIC and the last digits are assigned by the sheriff's department. An example of this number would be: John Doe of Leon County -- FL0370001D

FL	037	0001D
State Prefix	County NCIC-ORI Code	Number assigned by sheriff's department indicating that J. Doe was the first person with the last name beginning with "D" to register for an NCIC-ORI.

DLN: A Directory of NCIC-ORI codes is currently available to all law enforcement agencies through the Department of Law Enforcement, Florida Crime Information Center.

This system works effectively. When the owner reports that a piece of property has been stolen, the law enforcement agency reports it to the FCIC (Florida Crime Information Center) as an on-line entry. The FCIC indexes it into the state system and forwards the information to the NCIC

DLN: For more detailed directions consult, the FCIC Operations Guide or the Florida Crime Information Center, FDLE.

Setting up the NCIC-ORI system is simple. A very efficient record-keeping system can be achieved with a 3 x 5 card file and a ledger. Use the ledger to keep a list of assigned and available numbers in numerical sequence. As a number is assigned, write the individual's name beside it in the ledger. Then use the 3 x 5 card to list all the required information; e.g., name, address, phone number, etc. This is relatively inexpensive to operate and provides a quick cross-reference of the owner identification numbers.

As said early, there are a variety of numbers used and each has its advantages and disadvantages. Ideally, the best number to use is an owner identifier that: is universally recognized by the public and law enforcement; that is interjurisdictionally traceable; that is a unique personal identifier; and is simple and functional. These are the characteristics that should be kept in mind when deciding on which numbering system to use.

A problem that often faces law enforcement is not being able to locate the owner identification number on the property, especially heavy equipment. As a solution, uniform marking spots have been established to enable law enforcement to find the identification number. Besides the standard marking areas, it is recommended that the owner mark his equipment in hidden areas that are only known to him. Taking this added precaution will allow the owner to still claim the equipment if the obvious mark has been removed.

DLN: A Marking Guide that shows where to mark the property is available through the Florida Farm Bureau or HELP STOP CRIME!

- When marking property, write down serial numbers and descriptions on an inventory sheet (available through HELP STOP CRIME!). Keep these records in a safe place and readily available for law enforcement.

- To identify grains, vegetables, fruits and nursery stock, mix non-toxic tabs or confetti, that have the owner's identification number printed on them, with each shipment. Mark any crates, boxes, etc., with the owner's or company's name. Keep the tabs or confetti visible, advertising that the product is marked. When marking baled commodities, insert the tabs into the bales. When marking tobacco, use strips of tobacco-approved

confetti to tie around the random hands and throw into each bale.

- Paint items that can not be marked with the usual marking tools; e.g., trees, pipes, beehives, etc. Use one color that will be associated with the owner and keep it on file with the inventory sheets.

- Brand or mark all livestock. Keep records of born, sold, butchered, and bought animals. Register brand or mark with the Division of Marks/ Brands, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs. (See appendix for types of brands).

- Property that can not be marked should be photographed in detail with a complete description of the article on the back of the photo.

Some property may change owners many times. The seller should draw one line through his identification number and show the buyer where he has marked the equipment. In turn the new owner should place his number under the other owner's number and in other hidden places.

After property has been marked, display Operation Identification stickers and signs on and around the property to advertise the marking. This may act as a deterrent to a potential burglar.

Marking equipment, such as engravers, electric or propane tire branders, gate post signs and stickers are available through the Florida Farm Bureau and law enforcement. Pamphlets, stickers, and print ads are available through HELP STOP CRIME!

Stress the fact that citizens must notify law enforcement about any lost or stolen property. When reporting, give law enforcement all information from the inventory sheet and any other pertinent information.

COMMUNITY FARM WATCH

The Community Farm Watch, or more commonly known as Neighborhood Watch, is an effective way to reduce crime in the community. Farm Watch consists of a network of neighbors trained by crime prevention officers in home and self protection, suspect identification, and how to serve effectively as additional eyes and ears for law enforcement.

Farm Watch, or other crime watching groups provide a way for neighbors to help one another by keeping an eye on each other's property. This mutual aid has several advantages since neighbors will know who lives where, what type of vehicles each other drives, and the type of work schedules everyone keeps. Neighbors know what is normal activity in their area better than the patrolling officer does.

The main line of communication is the telephone chain. It is through this chain that neighbors are able to keep each other informed of any suspicious or criminal activity. Each Farm Watch member is responsible for calling another member, until all members have been reached.

The Farm Watcher's only responsibility is to report suspicious or criminal activity to the police and then through the telephone chain. Under no circumstances, should members act as law enforcement officers and try to apprehend a suspect. By doing this they could be putting their lives in danger.

To develop a Farm Watch in your community, take the following guidelines and adapt them to your area:

Each Farm Watch Member is responsible for:

1. Learning to recognize legitimate neighborhood activity.
2. Reporting any suspicious and criminal activity to law enforcement and also to neighbors through the telephone chain.
3. Notifying neighbors and Area Captains when they will be away for a period of time. Get a neighbor to pick up newspapers and mail and to check your residence and property.
4. Advertising that you are a participant in Farm Watch. Post metal signs in the area and on your property.
5. Understanding and using the telephone chain. Use CBs when a phone is not available to report suspicious or criminal activity.
6. Cooperating with law enforcement officers and neighbors.-- This is essential if the program is going to work.
7. Reporting crimes or suspicious activity. Never try to apprehend a suspect.

If a person returns home and finds it burglarized, he should not enter his home or structure. He should contact law enforcement immediately and wait for the deputy to arrive.

If a person hears or suspects a burglar is on his property, he should try to avoid a confrontation. Care should be taken not to let the burglar know he is detected. If he confronts the burglar, the burglar could become physically violent and hurt the individual/family.

When a member becomes a victim of a crime or observe a crime or suspicious activity, he should contact law enforcement immediately, then call his Area Capatin, if possible, who will begin the telephone chain.

Reporting suspicious activity can not be stressed enough. It is better to check out suspicious activity and find nothing, than to have to investigate a crime that could have possibly been prevented by a telephone call to the authorities. Citizens should not feel embarrassed or ridiculous in reporting strange or suspicious persons, vehicles or activity.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT:

To increase better response by law enforcement, it is important that citizens know how to report a crime or suspicious activity.

1. Identify yourself -- name, address, phone number (this is preferable, but not mandatory). If you live on a route try to give exact location and directions.
2. Type of crime -- suspicious person/activity, burglary, assault, ect.

Burglary: breaking and entering a house or structure to steal.

Robbery: (armed) the taking of some item(s) while a person is being threatened with a weapon.

Larceny: theft of property without forced entry.

Assault: an intentional, unlawful threat by work or act to do violence to a person, coupled with the apparent ability to do so.

Assault & Battery: physical assault of a person without the use of a weapon.

3. Crime "in progress" or "has occurred".
4. Where? Be specific as possible.
5. Description of suspect(s) how many, clothes, hair, height, weight, etc. ARE THEY ARMED? Direction of travel.
6. Vehicle Description - make, color, tag number (try to at least get the last three digits), any identifying marks - dents, etc., direction of travel.

PROSECUTION

One of the biggest complaints the agricultural industry has is the poor prosecution and conviction rate of persons arrested for agricultural-related crimes. This industry often feels neglected by the criminal justice system. They feel that law enforcement and the court system should "do something" about their crime problem.

The fact is that the justice system is trying to "do something", but they are not getting total cooperation from the agricultural industry. Many farmers do not report crime or will not take the time necessary to follow through with the case. It is not fair to place all the blame on the justice system, when the agricultural community is not trying their best to cooperate in the prosecution of criminals. Law enforcement and prosecutors need assistance from the farmer in order to successfully convict the criminal.

Determining whether or not to prosecute is the responsibility of the State Attorney's Office. The most critical factor in deciding to prosecute is if the charges can be proven. The burden of proof rests upon the prosecutor and he must be able to convince the judge and jury that the defendant is guilty as charged.

The most effective way the farmer can help to reduce this burden of proof is to:

1. report the crime immediately, so that evidence can be collected.
2. cooperate with the State Attorney's Office and understand that this process will take time.

3. be able to identify and prove ownership of stolen property.

By doing the above, the farmer is increasing the prosecutor's chances of successfully prosecuting the defendant.

An excellent way to increase communication between the agricultural community, law enforcement and the courts is to hold an "Agricultural Crime Forum". Bring together representatives from law enforcement, State Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, judges, Farm Bureau members, agricultural associations and citizens to discuss the problems of agricultural crime and how everyone can assist each other.

Be sensitive about the possibility of the forum turning into a gripe session. To avoid this, be sure to establish some ground rules that will maintain a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. There should be no finger pointing. Once someone is on the defense communication begins to deteriorate, which hinders the primary objective of these meetings.

These forums have proven to be successful by increasing communication and understanding between the criminal justice components and the community.

DLN: You may want to explain arrest and prosecution procedures; arrest "booking", first appearances, arraignment, trial, pre-sentence investigation, sentencing. Again, emphasize the importance of cooperating with the system. By working together, we can reduce agricultural crimes.

RESOURCE REFERRAL GUIDE

In addition to HELP STOP CRIME! the following agencies can provide further assistance and information.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & CONSUMER SERVICES

Marks/Brands Unit
Room 331, Mayo Building
Tallahassee, Florida 32301
904/488-7141

Bureau of Information/Education Research
Room 408, Mayo Building
Tallahassee, Florida 32301
904/488-6336

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Uniform Crime Report (Crime Statistics)
Post Office Box 1489
Tallahassee, Florida 32302
904/488-5221

FLORIDA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

Post Office Box 730
Gainesville, Florida 33802
904/378-1321

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Dean for Extension
1038 McCarty Hall
Gainesville, Florida
904/392-1761

FLORIDA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Post Office Box 1929
Kissimmee, Florida 32741
305/846-6221

FLORIDA CITRUS MUTUAL

Post Office Box 89
Lakeland, Florida 32602
813/682-1111

COUNTY FARM BUREAUS
COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICES

APPENDIX

Branding Methods:

Branding Iron: The iron should be at the right temperature - the color of wood ash grey. The animal should be dry; branding wet animals causes steam scald, unnecessary burning and brand blotching. Burn just the outer layer of skin, any deeper will create sores and poor brand.

Freeze Brand: Chemical is used to brand animals. The chemical is applied to the skin and will turn hair white, leaving a permanent white brand.

Slap Tattoo: A rubber hose with plate attached at the end is used to apply this type of brand. The plate has a series of needles forming the brand, that have been dipped in a dye. It is applied to the hip area. Used mostly for pork.

Lip Tattoo: A needle with dye is used to mark lip of livestock.

Dye Markings: The use of indelible dye or ink for marking livestock.

Ear Tags/Marks: Very common practice and can be easily removed or altered. Tags are attached to the ear by a plastic tab punched through the animal's ear. An ear mark is a number or other identifying mark that is tattooed on the inside/outside of the ear. Another ear marking method is to cut the ear in a uniform manner.

Boeing Passive Identifier: A small metal plate is inserted just under the hide between the ears. The plate has an identifying number and is picked up by a special detector. This is expensive and not common in Florida.

MARKING CODES-HORSES: Head-horses can be identified by certain markings located on the heads -- Snip - white around the nose; Star on forehead between eyes; Strip - white strip down nose; Legs - half markings; full ankle marks; half stocking; full stocking. This information is kept in detailed form or pictures are taken.

TRESPASSING:

One is guilty of trespassing when one enters onto land that is posted, fenced or cultivated without the owner's permission. (Definitions taken from F.S. 810.011)

POSTED: Sign placed not more than 500 feet apart along the boundaries and at each corner and on such signs the word "posted" should appear, in two inch letters, as well as the name of the owner, lessee or occupant of the land. Signs must be placed in a manner and position as to be clearly noticeable from outside the boundary line.

FENCED: Land enclosed by a fence of substantial construction at least three feet high.

CULTIVATED: Land which has been cleared or natural vegetation and is presently planted with a crop, orchard, grove, pasture or as fallow land as part of crop rotation.

PRIVATE PATROLS

THE CITRUS GROWER WHO HIRES A PRIVATE PATROL (OR A PATROLMAN) FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROTECTING HIS CITRUS PROPERTIES AGAINST TRESPASSERS, THIEVES AND VANDALS WILL RECEIVE VERY LITTLE SATISFACTION FOR THE MONEY INVESTED UNLESS THE PERSONNEL WHO WILL PATROL THE PROPERTIES ARE HONEST, CONSCIENTIOUS, LAW-ABIDING INDIVIDUALS OF GOOD CHARACTER AND UNQUESTIONABLE INTEGRITY.

ANY GROWER MEMBER INTERESTED IN SECURING THE SERVICES OF A PERSON OR PERSONS FOR THE PURPOSE OF PATROLLING GROVE PROPERTIES SHOULD OBTAIN THE ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS PRIOR TO EXECUTING A CONTRACT:

1. DOES SUCH PATROLMAN HAVE POLICE POWERS? (IF HE DOES NOT, HE DOES NOT HAVE ANY MORE POWER TO MAKE ARRESTS THAN YOU DO.)
2. HAS THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE STATED TO YOU THAT THEY WILL WORK WITH SUCH PATROLMAN? (THE PATROLMAN WILL NORMALLY NEED IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE WHEN AN OFFENSE HAS BEEN COMMITTED IN YOUR GROVE.)
3. DOES THE PATROLMAN HAVE RADIO CONTACT WITH THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE? (THE PATROLMAN MUST HAVE SOME FAST, RELIABLE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION TO REQUEST SERVICES OF LAW OFFICERS WHEN NEEDED.)
4. DOES THE PATROLMAN WEAR A UNIFORM WHILE ON PATROL? (POTENTIAL WRONGDOERS WILL KNOW THAT THE PATROLMAN IN UNIFORM IS NOT MERELY A PASSERBY.)
5. DOES THE PATROLMAN CARRY A GUN? DOES HE HAVE A PERMIT? IS HE BONDED? (THERE IS ALWAYS A DANGER THE GROWER MAY BECOME INVOLVED IN A DAMAGE SUIT IF A PATROLMAN WHO IS NOT A LAW OFFICER SHOOTS SOMEONE.)
6. HAS THE PATROLMAN RECEIVED LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER TRAINING? (IF HE HAS NOT, HE PROBABLY WOULD NOT PROTECT (OR MIGHT DESTROY) EVIDENCE AT THE SCENE OF THE CRIME.)
7. WILL PATROLLING BE IN A VEHICLE, ON FOOT OR BY BOTH METHODS? (A POTENTIAL WRONGDOER CAN HIDE WHEN HE SEES THE LIGHTS, OR HEARS THE ENGINE OF THE PATROL VEHICLE.)
8. DOES THE PATROLMAN HAVE A VEHICLE AVAILABLE? IS IT IN GOOD CONDITION? (THE PATROLMAN MAY NEED A RELIABLE VEHICLE AVAILABLE FOR INSTANT PURSUIT.)
9. WILL A SUBSTITUTE PATROLMAN BE MADE AVAILABLE WITHOUT ANY ACTION ON YOUR PART IF THE REGULAR PATROLMAN BECOMES INCAPACITATED? (POSSIBLY THE PATROLMAN HAS OR CAN MAKE A WORKING AGREEMENT WITH A SUBSTITUTE.)

IF IT'S GOOD FOR THE GROWER - MUTUAL'S DOING IT!



10. AT WHAT HOUR OF THE DAY OR NIGHT WILL PATROLLING OF YOUR GROVE BEGIN AND WHEN WILL IT TERMINATE? (THE HOURS OF PATROLLING OF YOUR GROVE SHOULD DEPEND UPON THE TYPE OF TROUBLE YOU ARE ENCOUNTERING.)
11. WILL THERE BE PATROLLING EVERY DAY? (VERY LIKELY THE CRIMES BEING COMMITTED IN YOUR GROVE WILL OCCUR MORE OFTEN AT CERTAIN TIMES RATHER THAN OTHERS. ANY PATROLLING IN YOUR GROVES SHOULD BE DONE AT THOSE TIMES WHEN THE CRIMINALS ARE TO BE EXPECTED.)
12. HOW OFTEN WILL YOUR GROVE BE PATROLLED? (THIS WILL DEPEND UPON THE SIZE OF YOUR GROVE AND THE SIZE OF ANY OTHER GROVES TO BE PATROLLED. MAKE CERTAIN THE PATROLMAN DOES NOT HAVE SO MUCH AREA TO PATROL THAT HE DOES NOT HAVE TIME TO AFFORD PROPER PROTECTION TO YOUR GROVE.)
13. IS THE PATROLMAN AN INDEPENDENT AGENT? (IF THE PATROLMAN HAS A BOSS, THE PATROLMAN WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO MAKE ANY POLICY DECISIONS. THIS MAY CAUSE DELAYS WHEN TIME MAY BE CRITICAL. ALSO, A PERCENTAGE OF ANY MONEY YOU PAY SUCH PATROLMAN WILL NOT GO FOR PATROLLING BUT WILL GO TO HIS BOSS.)
14. HOW CAN YOU BE CERTAIN TO OBTAIN YOUR MONEY'S WORTH OF PATROLLING SERVICES CONTRACTED FOR? (UNLESS THE PATROLMAN PUNCHES TIME CLOCKS LOCATED AT SELECTED SPOTS ON HIS PATROL, YOU WILL PROBABLY NOT KNOW IF AND WHEN HE IS PATROLLING. TO ELIMINATE THE POSSIBILITY OF "FEATHERBEDDING" ONLY PATROLMEN OF KNOWN EXTREMELY HIGH CHARACTER AND INTEGRITY SHOULD BE EMPLOYED.)
15. IF YOU DECIDE THAT YOU DO NOT WANT TO HIRE ANY PATROLMAN UNLESS HE HAS POLICE POWERS, WHAT ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN? (IF YOUR GROVE IS LOCATED WITHIN THE LIMITS OF A MUNICIPALITY, YOU SHOULD CONTACT THE CHIEF OF POLICE TO DETERMINE IF ANY OF THE CITY POLICEMEN COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR PATROLLING SERVICES AFTER THEIR REGULAR WORKING HOURS. IF YOUR GROVE IS IN THE COUNTY, AND IF THE OWNERS OF GROVES ADJOINING YOURS ALSO DESIRE THAT THEIR GROVES BE PATROLLED, SUGGEST THAT YOU CONTACT YOUR SHERIFF TO ASCERTAIN IF HE WILL ASSIST YOU IN THE SELECTION AND INVESTIGATION OF A PATROLMAN AND FURTHER, IF HE WILL GIVE SUCH INDIVIDUAL A SPECIAL DEPUTY COMMISSION FOR THE LIMITED AREA WHEREIN THE GROVES ARE LOCATED AND FOR NO OTHER AREA.)

IF IT'S GOOD FOR THE GROWER - MUTUAL'S DOING IT!



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