



**FIELD
TO FUTURE**

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ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LIVESTOCK THEFT PREVENTION FORUMS:

A Multi-Dimensional Study of Strategies, Stakeholder
Collaboration, and Legal Frameworks

STUDY CONDUCTED BY:

Willie Clack - Senior Lecturer, University of South Africa, School for Criminal Justice



This research forms part of the RMIS Field to Future (R&D) process, where research priorities are identified through public consultation and industry engagement. The study was commissioned in response to a need identified through this process and funded by Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS).

The research was conducted independently by the appointed service provider, and the findings, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views, positions, or policies of RMIS.



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Reflections on Gratitude and the Forgotten Producer

I attribute my ability to research to the Almighty God, with a refrain in my head, “Nearer my God to Thee”

Regarding the farmer, the following reflections are adopted and adapted from Resane (2018)

Scanning through prayers of thanksgiving, one notices a recurring pattern: we thank the Provider (God) and the hands that prepare the food, yet we rarely acknowledge the producer — the farmer. This absence highlights a deeper issue: the farmer, despite being essential to human survival, remains invisible, mainly in expressions of gratitude.

The farmer bridges the divine provision and human consumption, embodying both labour and faith as Conradie (2016) observes, “*All that is alive lives by eating. To eat is to participate in God’s gift of life, even to participate in God’s eternal life. The blessings from God imply that the materiality of the world is a doxological expression of God’s gift; creation is a Eucharistic sign of thanksgiving*” (p. 4). When understood this way, the farmer’s work becomes a sacred, living act of participation in God’s creation.

From the Garden of Eden to the stories of patriarchs, Job, and Boaz, the biblical narrative celebrates farming as a source of wealth, sustenance, and identity. Even Christ used agricultural imagery in parables because his audience understood the importance of farming. Stories such as Naboth’s vineyard remind us that land and cultivation are not merely economic activities, but sacred trusts tied to faith, community, and continuity.

Thus, the farmer is not simply a labourer but a guardian of life, ensuring that humanity may eat, thrive, and flourish. This acknowledgement of the farmer complements our gratitude to God and those who prepare food — a reminder that life depends on unseen hands as much as divine blessing.

Further publications

Selected findings from this study will also be submitted to a Special Issue of the Journal of Social Sciences, which explores how systematic, positive interactions between police and communities build trust, legitimacy, and collaboration. By examining the effectiveness of Stock Theft Prevention Forums, this research contributes insights into combining proactive crime reduction strategies with community engagement to improve policing outcomes and strengthen rural community partnerships.

THANK YOU



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: RMIS REPORT 2025

Assessing the Effectiveness of Livestock Theft Prevention Forums (LSTPFs)

Livestock theft continues to pose a significant threat to South Africa's agricultural sector, with far-reaching economic, social, and psychological consequences. This report presents a comprehensive evaluation of the Livestock Theft Prevention Forums (LSTPFs), including the National (NSTPF), Provincial (PSTPF), and local Stock Theft Information Centres (STICs). *The most important finding is that all participants, regardless of their role in the community, e.g., livestock producers, SAPS members, Prosecutors, agents, etc., agree in their responses.* The study employs a mixed-methods approach to assess the effectiveness of the forums in reducing livestock theft, enhancing stakeholder collaboration, and influencing policy and legal frameworks.

Key Findings

- **Historical and Legal Context**

- Livestock theft has deep historical roots in South Africa, shaped by colonial and apartheid-era legislation.
- The Stock Theft Act of 1959 remains the primary legal instrument, but it is outdated and misaligned with current realities.

- **Trends in Livestock Theft**

- While reported cases have declined over five years, financial losses have increased, especially in goat theft.
- The shift from frequent, small-scale incidents to fewer but more economically damaging thefts is evident.

- **Recovery Rates and Police Performance**

- Recovery rates have stagnated at R250–R300 million annually since 2007, despite rising theft values exceeding R1 billion.
- This reflects systemic inefficiencies in investigation, prosecution, and inter-provincial coordination.

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- **Improved Reporting Rates**
 - Reporting of livestock theft has improved significantly, with 86.6% of victims now reporting incidents to SAPS—up from just 23% in earlier years.
 - This shift reflects successful awareness campaigns and growing trust in formal reporting channels.
 - **Forum Participation and Visibility**
 - Only 1.1% of respondents are involved at the national level and 8.7% at the STIC level.
 - Over 70% of respondents did not know about local meetings, and 51% were unaware of stakeholder participation.
 - **Leadership and Governance Challenges**
 - Although SAPS is the statutory lead under the Rural Safety Strategy, 54.8% of respondents preferred leadership by organised agriculture.
 - The absence of formal governance documentation has led to ambiguity and weakened accountability.
 - **Technology and Crime Prevention**
 - Technologies such as GPS collars, CCTV, and WhatsApp groups are widely used but not formally integrated into LSTPF structures.
 - Technology providers are not formally included in provincial or national forums, limiting their contribution.
 - **Training, Funding, and Levy Impact**
 - 64.9% of respondents found current training initiatives inadequate.
 - 51% questioned the impact of the statutory levy, and 32.5% were unaware of how funds are used.
 - **Media Coverage and Public Awareness**
 - Media attention has increased but remains uneven across provinces, with urban areas receiving disproportionate coverage.

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- This affects public perception and policy prioritisation, often neglecting rural and provincial realities.

Recommendations

- **Strengthen Leadership and Governance**

- Formalise LSTPF leadership roles, with SAPS as the statutory lead and organised agriculture as co-leaders.
- Introduce annual performance reviews and transparent reporting mechanisms.

- **Modernise the Legislative Framework**

- Update the Stock Theft Act to include biometric identification, digital traceability, and stricter penalties for repeat offenders.
- Institutionalise inter-provincial cooperation to address livestock theft networks operating across provincial lines.

- **Enhance Investigative and Recovery Capacity**

- Expand and equip specialised SAPS stock theft units with modern tools and training.
- Develop a national recovery monitoring system and standardise intelligence-led policing.

- **Reallocate Resources considering Improved Reporting**

- Given the significant improvement in livestock theft reporting rates, a portion of the R2 million annual statutory levy currently used for awareness campaigns could be redirected.
- These funds should support under-resourced provinces, technology integration, and operational capacity-building at the local level.

- **Revitalise Community Forums**

- Improve visibility, participation, and communication at the STIC level.

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- Ensure inclusive representation from commercial, emerging, and communal farmers.
 - **Invest in Technology and Data Integration**
 - Allocate statutory levy funds toward digital platforms and rural security infrastructure.
 - Establish a national livestock theft information platform integrating SAPS, agriculture, and auction systems.
 - **Strengthen Media and Public Awareness**
 - Promote balanced, multilingual media coverage and public education campaigns.
 - Engage community radio and vernacular platforms to broaden reach.
 - **Improve Research Collaboration**
 - Establish a national research consortium and open-access data policies.
 - Prioritise inclusion of communal and emerging farmers in future studies.
 - **Boost Inter-Provincial Coordination**
 - Revive successful inter-provincial forums (e.g., Free State–North West–Gauteng–Mpumalanga model).
 - Develop harmonised livestock identification systems and joint provincial operations.
 - **Implement Monitoring and Evaluation**
 - Introduce a national performance scorecard tracking recovery rate, conviction outcomes, and forum participation.
 - Publish annual progress reports and conduct independent audits.

This report underscores the urgent need for reform in South Africa's livestock theft prevention strategy. While the LSTPF framework provides a foundation,

its effectiveness is undermined by leadership ambiguity, limited community engagement, outdated legislation, and underutilised technology. Implementing the above recommendations will enhance coordination, restore trust, and strengthen rural resilience across all provinces.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFASA	African Farmers Association of South Africa
AOSIS	African Online Scientific Information Systems
ATLAS	Archive for Technology, Life-World, and Everyday Language
BFAP	Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy
BFASA	Black Farmers Association of South Africa
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
CPF	Community Policing Forum
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
DALLRD	Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
GPSJS	Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey
GWK	Griekwaland Wes Kooperasie
HASA	Historical Association of South Africa
IBM	International Business Machines
IBSS	International Bibliography of the Social Sciences
IOL	Independent Online (news outlet)
LSTPF	Livestock Theft Prevention Forums
NAMC	National Agricultural Marketing Council
NAFLA	National Farmers and Livestock Association
NAFU	National African Farmers Union
NERPO	National Emerging Red Meat Producers Organisation
NSTF	National Stock Theft Forum
NSTPF	National Stock Theft Prevention Forum
PIJPSM	Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management
PSTPF	Provincial Stock Theft Prevention Forums
PTY	Proprietary (used in company names)
RAG	Red Meat Action Group
RFID	Radio-Frequency Identification
RMIF	Red Meat Industry Forum
RMIS	Red Meat Industry Services
RMRDT	Red Meat Research and Development Trust
RPO	Red Meat Producers Organisation
RSS	Rural Safety Strategy
SAAI	South African Agri Initiative
SAFDA	South African Farmers Development Association

SAJAE South African Journal of Agricultural Extension
SALU South African Agricultural Union
SAPS South African Police Service
SASAS South African Social Attitudes Survey
SPSS Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
STESU Stock Theft and Endangered Species Units
STIC Stock Theft Information Centre
STICS Stock Theft and Endangered Species Information Centres
TAU-SA Transvaal Agricultural Union – South Africa

INTRODUCTION

Livestock theft has been a persistent and complex challenge in South Africa, deeply rooted in the country's legal, social, and economic history. Early legislation, such as the Cattle Removal Act of 1870, was introduced not only to regulate livestock movement but also to reinforce colonial racial and labour hierarchies, disproportionately affecting black rural populations (Van Sittert, 2014). These legal frameworks evolved, culminating in the Stock Theft Act 1959, which remains the foundation for contemporary efforts to combat livestock theft. Despite these legal advancements, livestock theft continues to be a significant threat to agricultural producers, compromising rural livelihoods and national food security (Zwane et al., 2013). Multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as the Livestock Theft Prevention Forums (LSTPF), were established to coordinate prevention and enforcement strategies. However, questions remain about the effectiveness of the LSTPF in achieving its intended goals. This study employs a mixed-methods design to assess the effectiveness of Livestock Theft Prevention Forums, including the National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF), Provincial Stock Theft Prevention Forums (PSTPF), and Local Stock Theft Information Centres (STIC), in reducing livestock theft across South Africa. By integrating quantitative data gathered directly from producers with qualitative insights from key stakeholders, the research aims to deliver a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of the forums' impact and identify areas for strategic improvement. The investigation is structured around five interrelated dimensions. First, it examines the criminal justice system and recovery rates, interrogating the reliability of recovery statistics as indicators of SAPS performance and exploring how these figures reflect community engagement in theft prevention. Second, it considers farmers' perspectives and community effects, analysing how livestock owners perceive theft trends, identify risk factors, and experience the consequences of theft, while comparing these lived experiences with official data from SAPS and the forums. Third, the study examines on-the-ground preventive strategies, identifying the most widely used and effective on-farm and community-

based interventions, and assessing how local patrols and surveillance efforts are coordinated with SAPS and forum structures. Fourth, it assesses policy, legislation, and the role of LSTPF in shaping deterrence, focusing on the effectiveness of current laws, penalties, and institutional responses, as well as the capacity of the forums to communicate operational needs and research priorities. Finally, the study examines collaboration and knowledge transfer, identifying best-practice models for stakeholder cooperation and assessing the role of these forums in facilitating information sharing and coordination among farmers, the criminal justice system, and other stakeholders involved in rural crime prevention.

BACKGROUND TO LIVESTOCK THEFT PREVENTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The legal history of stock theft legislation in South Africa reflects the deep entanglement of race, property, and administrative control in the colonial and postcolonial state. From the early efforts in the Cape Colony to regulate livestock movement through passes to the establishment of Union-era national laws targeting stock theft, legal instruments evolved to protect settler economic interests and reinforce state surveillance, especially over black rural populations. These laws shaped the movement of livestock and were intertwined with broader systems of labour control and biometric governance (Van Sittert, 2014).

The period from 1652 to 1750

The Khoikhoi were largely guilty of livestock theft, and to curb stock theft by Khoe-San groups and other African communities, the colonial authorities introduced the commando system—a loosely organised militia in which frontier farmers were obliged to participate. Instead of attending personally, these farmers often sent representatives, often farm labourers of Indigenous or mixed ancestry (Sinclair-Thomson, 2021). Between 1652 and 1700, several Khoikhoi were convicted of illegal cattle raids and livestock theft in 1678 and 1683. During the period from 1700 to 1750, only eighteen Khoikhoi were convicted. After 1750, once again, there was a consistent

pattern: the Khoikhoi murdered the slave herders and then stole the livestock (Heese, 1987). However, this figure is likely a significant underestimate, considering that commandos rarely reported their actions officially and that numerous unofficial expeditions also took place. This becomes even more evident when we learn that between 1786 and 1795, a total of 2,504 Khoe-San individuals were killed and 669 captured in the Graaf-Reinet district (Sinclair-Thomson, 2021).

A legal history of stock theft regulation in the Cape Colony, the Republics and South Africa, 1855–1957

Before the 1800s, cattle theft in South Africa was addressed by a version of the European hot pursuit system, which evolved into a local understanding of the so-called 'spoor law'. However, people believe the spoor law is a rule of African customary law determining liability. The enactment of the South African Constitution in 1996 declared this practice unconstitutional (Bennett & Jacobs, 2012). There was no separate crime for stock theft, and the crime was prosecuted as the common law crime of theft

In the late nineteenth century, before the unification of the old provinces in South Africa, stock theft increased, prompting the enactment of statutory provisions to supplement the prevailing common law. The first enactment was in Natal in 1855 in an ordinance 'to more effectually check and punish the stealing of cattle'. In 1864, the Cape legislature enacted the Cattle Theft Repression Act, a measure designed to suppress cattle and sheep theft. This was followed by the Cattle Removal Act of 1870 (Cape Act No. 14 of 1870), which required any person transporting stock more than ten miles to obtain a certificate (Milton et al., 1988). The pass had to specify the owner, driver, origin, destination, and a detailed description of the animals. Although racially neutral in language, the Act was enforced almost exclusively against black livestock owners and drovers. As Van Sittert (2014) explains, the legislation empowered landowners to demand passes,

seize livestock, and report infractions, actions seldom taken against white farmers, who viewed such scrutiny as an insult.

The Cattle Removal Act was repeatedly amended to close enforcement loopholes and adapt to administrative challenges. The Cattle and Stock Definitions Amendment Act of 1885 (Cape Act No. 12 of 1885) and Cattle Removal Amendment Acts of 1889, 1891, and 1896 (Acts No. 20 of 1889; No. 12 of 1891; No. 7 of 1896) addressed issues of fraud and vague livestock descriptions. Officials noted that farmers frequently issued passes without inspecting the animals, relying instead on reports from their servants. This practice enabled substitution and laundering of stolen stock (Van Sittert, 2014).

To counter such fraud, the Native Locations Acts of 1876 and 1878 introduced a more comprehensive regime of stock registration, including mandatory branding and reporting requirements. Inspectors were tasked with keeping detailed livestock registers and verifying ownership, a role hampered by logistical and financial constraints (Cape of Good Hope, 1876, 1878). Despite resistance from rural African communities, these measures began a biometric turn in livestock governance. As Van Sittert (2014) notes, the fixation of human and animal identity was central to the colonial project of surveillance and control.

In the Cape Colony, stock theft was prosecuted under the Criminal Procedure Act 17 of 1867 (*Queen v Malata and Another* (1893-1895) 7 HCG 244, n.d.), after which stock theft was criminalised by the Stock Theft Act 35 of 1893. The act was commonly used to prosecute stock theft cases ("Cape Law Examination Reports," 1904). In Motion 186 of 1906 (1906 23 SC 95), the Supreme Court of the Cape of Good Hope confirmed that stock theft is a common law offence, and that theft remains a crime under the common law. Thus, the conviction was upheld despite the procedural irregularity in the charge. The Court clarified that this section does not create a new offence, but merely confers jurisdiction on Magistrates and sets limits on

punishment. The actual crime remains theft under the common law. Thus, the conviction was upheld despite the procedural irregularity in the charge.

In the Republic of Natalia from 1838 to 1845, cattle theft was considered a serious crime, often punished harshly, especially for black and coloured individuals. Typical sentences included 20 to 50 lashes and six months to two years of hard labour. Courts sometimes considered whether offenders were familiar with the law, offering reduced sentences to those deemed unaware of legal expectations. For example, in *J. Bodenstein v. Piet, Scheepers, and Manie*, Manie received a lighter sentence due to limited legal knowledge. However, the legal system displayed clear racial bias. Black and coloured offenders were rarely fined, likely because they could not afford to pay, and were instead subjected to corporal punishment and unpaid hard labour (Swanepoel, 1989).

In Natal, stock theft was criminalised more explicitly through the Cattle Stealing Act of 1898 (Natal Act No. 1 of 1899) and its 1902 amendment. One of the first cases on record was that of Odendaal, an Estcourt butcher, who purchased two oxen from a Native (J. L. Kumalo) without complying with Act 1 of 1899, which prohibits the purchase of cattle from Natives unless the sellers have passes as prescribed. The local Magistrate held that the purchase, having been illegal, Odendaal could not recover the money he had paid for the oxen ("The Stock Passes Act," 1902). In Natal, there was also a plea for a uniform branding system, rather than each individual having their own. There was also serious caution about fake brand marks. Faking brands on animals is not uncommon in the Natal Colony. In one example case from Johannesburg, a horse branded initially "J F" was stolen. After three months, it was found with a new owner. Upon inspection, the original owner noticed that the brand had been cleverly altered to "J B" by adding a few short lines ("A Brands Directory The Advantages of a Uniform System," 1906).

In the early 1800s in the Orange Free State, there was no formal legal system to manage relations with neighbouring communities. Instead, violence was often used to control territory and respond to issues like livestock theft. A notorious clash was with Witsie, where people were murdered, stolen livestock retrieved and given to people who participated in the raids. The clash with Witsie was not an isolated event, but part of a broader pattern in which the Free State government sought to make the land safe and livable for white settlers. Witsie's tribe was small and weak, making it easy for the Volksraad and State President to take a threatening stance and resort to armed conflict. These actions were driven more by revenge and the desire to assert dominance than by any legal process. Against stronger groups like the Griquas and Basotho, the Free State had to act more carefully, showing that might, not law, shaped early relations (Van Aswegen, 1970).

The Orange Free State followed with commodity theft legislation, such as Law No. 4 of 1895 (targeting wool, hides, and mohair). In 1889, Ordinance 15 was adopted by the Orange Free State Volksraad with the express purpose of combating stock theft (Eloff, 1988) and the Stock Theft Ordinance No. 6 of 1904 within its related brands ordinance and appointment of a brand registrar based on the Queensland Brands Act of 1872 (Pienaar, 1905). These efforts reflected a growing concern with livestock theft and a shift from administrative oversight to the criminal justice system. In 1909, Mr Pienaar lectured in Bloemfontein to plead for a uniform branding system in South Africa; furthermore, it was clear that provisions were made for all animal owners irrespective of race. ("A South African Uniform System of Stock-Branding," 1909). As of today, a century later, the registrar still needs to remind farmers of the advantages of branding, the most notable of which is the prevention of stock theft (Pienaar, 1908).

Following the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the stock theft regime was standardised under the Stock Theft Act of 1923 (Act No. 26 of 1923). This law repealed portions of previous Cape legislation,

including sections that mandated passes, and shifted the focus squarely onto criminal prosecution (Union of South Africa, 1923). The transition from the pass-based model reflected administrative maturation and a desire for legal uniformity across provinces. The recommendations of Pienaar in 1909 were also taken seriously, and a uniform branding system was adopted in 1923 (Goldman, 1923). Determining whether stock theft was rampant, the following summary of the Secretary for Justice's 1926 report indicates that stock theft was primarily driven by hunger or, in some cases, greed, rather than organised crime. He suggested that providing regular meat rations to native servants could significantly reduce theft. Backed by a statutory reverse onus of proof, rural magistrates imposed harsh punishments, including lashes and lengthy or indefinite sentences. However, in more "scientific" discourse, explanations beyond hunger and deprivation were also considered (Chanock, 1995).

Further consolidation came with the Stock Theft Amendment Act of 1942 (Act No. 16 of 1942), which repealed the 1923 Act and replaced it with updated provisions compatible with more centralised policing. By the time of the General Law Amendment Act of 1957 (Act No. 68 of 1957), the remnants of the colonial pass and registration system had been almost entirely eradicated, and stock theft was treated as a conventional criminal offence across South Africa.

From colonial control to statutory codification: The Stock Theft Act of 1959 and amendments

Following a century of increasingly centralised livestock control through colonial and Union-era legislation, the South African state codified a more uniform statutory framework with the enactment of the Stock Theft Act No. 57 of 1959. This law represented the culmination of prior efforts—originating in the Cape Colony and other provinces—to regulate livestock movement, combat rural theft, and control African stock ownership and labour access. While ostensibly race-neutral by the mid-twentieth century, the application

and structure of the 1959 Act reflected enduring patterns of racialised enforcement and state surveillance.

The Stock Theft Act of 1959 repealed and replaced significant portions of the 1923 Stock Theft Act, consolidating earlier fragmented ordinances and provincial laws. It criminalised the theft of stock and produce, established evidentiary presumptions regarding possession, and outlined penalties, including imprisonment and fines. Notably, it preserved aspects of earlier laws by allowing for presumptive guilt in cases of unbranded or unregistered livestock, thereby reinforcing the legal importance of traceability (South Africa, 1959).

Subsequent amendments to the 1959 Act over the next four decades reflected changes in South Africa's legal, political, and constitutional landscape. While many of these amendments were part of broader legal reforms, several specifically targeted the efficacy and scope of stock theft prosecution:

- General Law Amendment Act No. 80 of 1964: Expanded enforcement provisions and clarified jurisdictional matters.
- General Law Amendment Act No. 102 of 1972: Introduced procedural adjustments relating to evidence and burden of proof.
- Criminal Law Amendment Act No. 59 of 1983: Strengthened sentencing provisions for repeat offenders and addressed bail conditions.
- Stock Theft Amendment Act No. 32 of 1986: Reformed branding requirements and increased penalties for organised stock theft.
- Stock Theft Amendment Act No. 28 of 1990: Further codified responsibilities of livestock owners and tightened controls on auctions and resale.

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- Abolition of Racially Based Land Measures Act No. 108 of 1991: While not specific to stock theft, this Act removed legal barriers that had historically excluded black South Africans from land and livestock ownership, indirectly impacting enforcement dynamics.
 - General Law Third Amendment Act No. 129 of 1993: Amended definitions and procedural provisions relevant to rural policing.
 - Abolition of Corporal Punishment Act No. 33 of 1997: Removed whipping as a judicial sentence for stock theft and related rural crimes.
 - Judicial Matters Amendment Acts No. 62 of 2000 and No. 55 of 2002: These updated administrative and procedural aspects of the Act align it with constitutional standards and post-apartheid judicial reforms.

Throughout these amendments, the enforcement structure remained focused on traceability, documentation, and possession-based presumptions, making the Stock Theft Act one of the few apartheid-era laws that persisted—with modification—into the democratic era. The resilience of the Act underscores the continuity of settler colonial legal logic in terms of land, labour, and property control.

In effect, the Stock Theft Act of 1959 served as a bridge between colonial livestock regulation and modern criminal law. While the branding (Johns, 1904) and handwritten passes of the 19th century gave way to police dockets and forensic evidence in the 20th, the logic of surveillance and suspicion remained remarkably intact. Even as South African law reoriented itself post-1994 to conform with constitutional guarantees of equality and due process, the statutory structure of livestock theft law retained much of its earlier character.

Although never formally published in the Government Gazette, the Controlled Animals and Animal Product Bill [B-2014], introduced by the

Minister of Police, was circulated among industry stakeholders for comment. It was conceived as a legislative update and potential supplement to the Stock Theft Act 57 of 1959, aiming to strengthen regulatory mechanisms surrounding the possession and movement of livestock and animal products. The Bill sought to modernise and extend the framework established by the Stock Theft Act, reflecting ongoing challenges in the prevention and policing of livestock-related crimes in South Africa. However, this initiative marked the end of that specific legislative attempt, as the Bill was never tabled for further parliamentary consideration or enacted.

Subsequently, renewed efforts have emerged to directly amend the Stock Theft Act of 1959, aligning it with contemporary challenges, including improved traceability, biometric identification technologies, cross-border stock theft, and organised rural crime (J. A. van der Walt, personal communication, December 11, 2023). These efforts underscore the enduring relevance of the Act and the need for a more responsive technology and modern legislative framework to address evolving threats to agricultural and rural security.

The legal framework in South Africa's stock theft prevention history reflects efforts to criminalise stock theft and promote prevention through deterrence, retribution, rehabilitation, and overall crime reduction as core objectives of prevention and sentencing. However, these legal measures alone proved insufficient in effectively curbing stock theft. As a result, specialised stock theft units were established to strengthen the criminal justice system capacity (Eloff, 1988). Additionally, community-based forums, such as Stock Theft and Endangered Species Information Centres (STICs), were introduced to enhance grassroots involvement (SAPS, 1999). These forums align with the broader concept of community participation in crime prevention, which gained traction in South Africa prior to the 1990s. According to Mistry (1997, p. 40), "the adoption of community policing has to be understood against the background of the massive shortcomings of

the ‘old’ [pre-1994] policing system.” By the mid-1990s, South African policing was marked by alarmingly high crime rates and a severe lack of public trust. This mistrust contributed to low levels of crime reporting, especially in historically under-policed communities. In many cases, policing was reactive and limited to a “fire-engine” approach, where police only responded to crimes after they occurred, often with delayed and minimal engagement. Police officers, facing significant hostility and concerns for their safety, tended to adopt a quick, “in-and-out” response style when responding to incidents. By 1994, proactive patrols and community engagement were virtually non-existent (Minnaar, 2010). Together, these developments represent a shift towards integrated and cooperative strategies, combining formal policing with local knowledge and community engagement to address the persistent and complex challenge of livestock theft (SAPS, 1999).

Stock thefts and Endangered Species Units

Specialised policing units is a fixture of modern-day policing (Gaub & Muñoz, 2024). In South Africa these units began in 1961 with the formation of units targeting vehicle theft, stock theft, and illegal firearms in the Witwatersrand Division, and expanded during the 1960s and 1970s with the establishment of Stock Theft Units along the Lesotho border in response to rising livestock theft in areas like Fouriesburg and Wepener (Aerni-Flessner et al., 2021; Dippenaar, 1988; Eloff, 1988). In 1989, a centralised Stock Theft Unit was established at the South African Police Service (SAPS) Headquarters to strengthen further the response to livestock theft (A. Oosthuizen, personal communication, June 6, 2024; Oosthuizen, 2012).

Throughout SAPS’s history since 1961, these specialised units were developed in a reactive and often ad hoc manner, typically in response to specific crime challenges in particular regions. Their operational command varied, with some reporting to provincial structures and others to area-level commands, depending on practical factors such as geographical

distance, budget limitations, inspection capacity, and debates over the principles of community policing (Redpath, 2002). In 2002, most specialised units were shut down, and the detectives were reassigned to local police stations. This change hurt the morale of both the detectives and the farming community (Myburgh, 2007; Redpath, 2002). All endangered species units were closed, but not all Stock Theft Units. During the early 2010s, endangered species were again included in the stock theft units and became known as the Stock Theft and Endangered Species Units (STESU) (SAPS, 2020).

In 2014, there were 84 STESUs (The Dairy Mail, 2014). By 2024, there are 93 Stock Theft and Endangered Species Units across all provinces: 22 in the Eastern Cape, 11 in the Free State, 2 in Gauteng, 16 in KwaZulu-Natal, 9 in Limpopo, 11 in Mpumalanga, 7 in the Northern Cape, 9 in the North West, and 6 in the Western Cape. Additionally, there are four satellite units in the Eastern Cape, one in the Free State, three in Gauteng, six in Limpopo, and one in Mpumalanga (SAPS, 2024).

Background on livestock theft prevention forums

Despite numerous legislative measures promoting community involvement in crime prevention, the need for collaborative efforts remains critical in addressing specific issues such as stock theft (Masuku & Motlalekgosi, 2021). Section 18(1)(a) of the South African Police Service (SAPS) Act of 1995, as amended, provides for the establishment and maintenance of partnerships between the SAPS and local communities. This framework, aimed at giving effect to section 205(2) of the 1996 Constitution, creates a solid legal foundation for initiatives such as LSTPFs, which foster cooperation between the criminal justice system and rural stakeholders to combat livestock-related crime effectively.

Additionally, following the reintegration of the former homelands into South Africa, stock theft surged, necessitating a national response. On 1 December 1995, SAPS convened a conference that formed the LSTPFs

(Clack, 2015; SAPS, 1999). These multi-stakeholder forums included representatives from organised agriculture, the red meat value chain, the criminal justice system, and non-governmental organisations (SAPS, 1999). It was initiated under the umbrella of the South African Agricultural Union (SALU), as part of post-apartheid efforts to build unity in combating livestock theft. In 1999, SALU was renamed AgriSA (AgriSA, 2024). Around the same period, the Transvaal Agricultural Union of South Africa (TAU-SA) chose to disengage from SALU activities to focus more specifically on commercial aspects of the red meat industry (AgriSA, 2024).

Although the LSTPFs were initially limited to organised agriculture, they later broadened their scope to include the communal sector through representation by the National Emerging Red Meat Producers Organisation (NERPO) (SAPS, 1999; Sihlobo, 2023). According to historical accounts, administrative responsibility for the NSTPF was eventually assumed by the "Cattle Committee", later formalised as the Red Meat Producers Organisation (RPO). However, no official documentation confirming this transition has been found (K. Visser, personal communication, August 18, 2021).

Since 2007, the RPO has received statutory funding through the Red Meat Industry Forum (RMIF) to manage the NSTPF. Initial funding began at R100,000 in 2007 and grew to R295,000 by 2018 (Schutte, 2013). Although this levy ended in November 2022, the function continued under a new statutory levy administered by Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS). From 5 November 2022 to 4 November 2026, RMIS allocated R2 million annually to support training initiatives and facilitate meetings aimed at reducing stock theft and enhancing prosecution outcomes (RPO, 2024).

Despite these developments, concerns remain about the NSTPF's effectiveness. After serving for 16 years, including eight as national chairperson, the author expressed doubts during his farewell message, admitting a perceived failure in fulfilling the forum's mission. Forum

members responded by asserting that successes had been achieved at the national level. However, failures at the provincial and local levels were evident (as noted in the meeting minutes from the author's position). The core issues identified include a lack of clear role assignments and fragmented efforts among competing organisations (Sihlobo & Kirsten, 2025). These internal divisions have hampered coordinated crime prevention, allowing livestock criminals to operate with increasing impunity.

A significant concern is the appointment of individuals lacking genuine commitment to crime prevention. Without passion and a clear understanding of stock theft as a collective social responsibility, collaborative strategies often fail to benefit the broader community, ultimately benefiting criminal actors. No official documentation assigns the NSTPF's leadership to any single organisation or individual. This ambiguity necessitates a thorough evaluation of the NSTPF's foundational objectives to determine its success in preventing livestock theft.

Forums like the NSTPF are crucial for facilitating multi-stakeholder coordination, information sharing, and policy development. They play a crucial role in legislative advocacy, the dissemination of best practices, and strategic crime prevention. The NSTPF meets biannually and includes all nine Provincial Stock Theft Prevention Forums (PSTPFs), which operate under Schedule 4 of the Constitution, addressing livestock theft as a provincial matter (Republic of South Africa, 1996; Swanepoel, 2013). These forums are formal social networks facilitating coordinated action across governmental and non-governmental sectors (Clack, 2015).

Stock Theft and Endangered Species Information Centres (STICs) are subordinate to the NSTPF and PSTPFs and report matters exceeding local capacity. STICs are informal, community-based structures formed at the request of livestock owners to enhance grassroots prevention of livestock theft. They enable cooperation among farmers, the criminal justice system, prosecutors, and other key stakeholders. STICs are tasked with sharing crime

intelligence, identifying livestock, supporting patrols, detecting theft hotspots, and maintaining liaison with prosecutors. Though often integrated with existing agricultural bodies, such as Farmers' Associations, STICs must ensure broad representation and confidentiality in their operations. Through their link to the NSTPF and PSTPF, STICs play a foundational role in community-based rural safety strategies.

However, the effectiveness of STICs and community involvement can be undermined more broadly when police ethics and competence are called into question. It has been argued that some officers do not respect all the rules and regulations, with specific provisions ignored, while others are strictly enforced (Prinsloo & Kingshot, 2004). Such inconsistencies erode trust and weaken collaboration. For STICs to realise their full potential, the community must recognise that policing is not the exclusive domain of police but rather a broader concept encompassing individual, collective, private, and government efforts (Prinsloo & Kingshot, 2004). Strengthening police integrity and embracing this inclusive view of policing are, therefore, essential to sustaining the cooperative framework that STICs represent.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Livestock theft is increasingly recognised as a multidimensional issue that extends far beyond its economic implications. While it directly undermines agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods, its emotional and psychological repercussions are equally profound. Research in South Africa has shown that livestock theft evokes intense feelings of grief, fear, and helplessness among farmers, as animals are often viewed not merely as assets but as integral to family identity and heritage (von Maltitz, 2024). Corrigan (2019) reveals that repeated thefts create a climate of chronic anxiety and insecurity, eroding farmers' trust in both the criminal justice system and their surrounding communities. Internationally, Smith (2020) found similar patterns in the United Kingdom, where agricultural crime contributes significantly to anxiety, isolation, and depression among

farmers. Collectively, these studies highlight livestock theft as not only an economic and emotional crisis but also a social one that fractures community relationships and weakens rural resilience. Consequently, understanding and addressing the emotional consequences of livestock theft is essential for strengthening community cohesion and promoting collective engagement in prevention strategies.

Community Policing Forums (CPFs) were established in South Africa around 1995 to enhance collaboration between the criminal justice system and local communities, thereby improving crime prevention and fostering public trust in the police (Masuku & Motlalekgosi, 2021; Minnaar, 2010; Pelser, 2000). These forums are particularly critical in rural areas, where formal policing resources are often limited and distances between communities and police stations are large. Despite their formal establishment, numerous studies indicate that the effectiveness of CPFs in rural areas is highly variable and constrained by a combination of structural, operational, and social factors (Wisler & Onwudiwe, 2008). Understanding these challenges is crucial to improving CPF performance and achieving the intended outcomes of community-based policing.

A recurring theme in the literature is that rural CPFs often suffer from significant resource limitations. Makondo et al. (2021) highlight in their study of the Malamulele and Saselamani policing areas in Limpopo that CPFs frequently lack adequate funding, transport, and logistical support, which restricts their ability to hold regular meetings, respond to incidents, and maintain visibility in the community. Kwashu (2023) echoes this observation in the Ritavi Policing Area, noting that resource shortages directly impede CPF activities and diminish their capacity to prevent or respond to crime effectively. Similarly, Malatji et al. (2023), studying Makhwibidung village in Greater Tzaneen Municipality, found that CPFs struggled to implement their mandates due to under-resourcing and poor coordination with police authorities.

Community engagement and awareness are equally central to CPF effectiveness, yet studies consistently report low levels of awareness and participation in rural settings. Makondo et al. (2021) found that a substantial portion of the surveyed population in Limpopo was unfamiliar with the roles and responsibilities of CPFs, undermining their legitimacy and functional capacity. Olofinbiyi and Mthembu (2020) also highlight that rural CPFs face challenges in mobilising community members, partly due to low civic awareness and minimal understanding of CPF processes. When communities are unaware or disengaged, CPFs are unable to serve as effective intermediaries between residents and police, which limits their potential to prevent or reduce crime.

Effective communication and coordination between CPFs, police, and communities are essential for timely crime prevention. Ngoveni et al. (2022) report, in their study of the Brooklyn Police Station and its associated rural areas, that poor communication and a lack of structured feedback loops hinder the performance of CPF. Residents often remain uninformed about CPF initiatives, and the absence of coordinated planning with local police reduces the forums' responsiveness to emerging crime patterns. These challenges are compounded in rural areas where physical distances and limited access to technology further impede effective communication.

The legitimacy and oversight of CPFs are closely tied to perceptions of transparency, accountability, and effectiveness. Dlamini (2024) emphasises that rural CPFs often lack robust civilian oversight, which weakens their accountability and reduces public trust. In the absence of oversight mechanisms, CPFs may fail to implement agreed-upon mandates or to respond appropriately to community concerns. Pelsaert (1999) similarly emphasises that early community policing models in South Africa required clear governance structures; however, in practice, these were often inadequately implemented in rural areas, resulting in diminished effectiveness and inconsistent adherence to procedural norms.

Clack (2024) offers a nuanced perspective, suggesting that community structures, such as stock theft information centres (STICs), are effective not merely by meeting frequency or budget, but through the intelligent deployment of local knowledge and social capital. Community guardianship depends on local legitimacy and trust, timely information networks, training and capacity for surveillance and evidence collection, and adaptability as theft syndicates evolve (for example, using trucks or GPS). These findings align with earlier observations regarding resource constraints, ineffective communication, and the necessity of civilian oversight (Makondo et al., 2021; Malatji, 2016; Dlamini, 2024).

Because livestock theft threatens household food security and undermines the red-meat economy, a multi-layered response is needed to prevent it, linking farming communities with the South African Police Service (SAPS), organised agriculture, and research institutions. Over time, four interrelated structures have emerged to meet this challenge: Community Policing Forums (CPFs), local Stock Theft Forums and Stock Theft Information Centres (STICs), Provincial Stock Theft Prevention Forums (PSTPF) and the National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF). The existing literature offers valuable insights into these bodies, but also reveals significant gaps—particularly concerning farmers' lived experiences and how they intersect with the national-level coordination of the NSTPF.

Community Policing Forums

CPFs were established under Section 18 of the SAPS Act of 1995 to promote partnership policing across all crime categories. They enable residents and civic organisations to meet police officials, share information, and influence local safety strategies. However, empirical research repeatedly shows that CPFs often struggle in rural contexts. Studies in Limpopo and elsewhere have reported low attendance, irregular meetings, and a limited impact on serious rural crime (Makondo, Mofokeng, & Khosa, 2021; Malatji, 2016; Olofinbiyi & Mthembu, 2020). Resource shortages and uneven police

participation further reduce their ability to address highly specialised offences such as livestock theft (Ngoveni, Maluleke & Mabasa, 2022). As Clack (2024) notes, effective community structures must function as active *guardians*; however, CPFs frequently lack the sustained engagement and technical focus required for this role in remote farming areas.

The National Stock Theft Prevention Forum

The establishment of the National Stock Theft Forum (NSTF) dates to 1 December 1995, when it was formally created in Pretoria to address stock-theft matters that could not be resolved at the provincial level. National Instruction 3 of 2020 confirms this origin and outlines the Forum's mandate to coordinate national strategies, obtain interdepartmental information, and guide policy on livestock-theft prevention. The Instruction specifies a broad membership, including the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, the National Prosecuting Authority, organised agriculture, and other advisory stakeholders. It provides procedures for escalating cases from Provincial Stock Theft and Endangered Species Forums to the national body. It further situates the Forum within a multi-tiered structure alongside Provincial Forums and local Stock Theft Information Centres (STICs), ensuring a continuum of response from farm level to national coordination (SAPS, 2020).

Empirical work shows that when well-resourced and supported, these forums can achieve measurable reductions in theft, for example, patrols in the Free State were credited with a double-digit drop in incidents (IOL, 2025).

Nevertheless, participation remains uneven, and farmers sometimes underreport incidents due to distrust or fear of reprisals (Masuku & Motlalekgosi, 2022). Clack (2024) emphasises that such forums represent community guardianship in practice: their vigilance and local knowledge disrupt criminal opportunity, but only when there is trust, timely intelligence, and adequate training.

Overlaps and differences between CPFs and STIC

Community Policing Forums (CPFs), local Stock Theft Forums and Stock Theft Information Centres (STICs), and the National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF) operate as interconnected layers of rural crime prevention, where CPFs provide broad community–police engagement, Stock Theft Forums focus specifically on livestock-related crime, and the NSTPF coordinates policy and research at national level; together they share information, escalate unresolved cases, and align local experiences with national strategies, forming a mutually reinforcing network for combating rural crime (National Instruction 3 of 2020).

Key Difference between CPFs and LSTPF

Table 1 compares Community Policing Forums (CPFs) and Stock Theft Prevention Forums (LSTPFs), highlighting how their mandates, membership structures, geographic focus, and operational strategies differ, reflecting their distinct roles in general community safety versus specialised livestock prevention.

Table 1 Comparative Analysis of Community Policing Forums (CPFs) and Stock Theft Prevention Forums (LSTPFs)

Dimension	Community Policing Forums	Stock Theft Prevention Forums / STICs
Mandate	Broad: all community-safety concerns, from burglary to domestic violence (Pelser, 1999).	Narrow: prevent, detect, and coordinate action on livestock theft, including branding compliance and auction monitoring (SAPS, 2020).
Origin & Legal Basis	Statutory requirement under the SAPS Act (1995).	Voluntary, producer-driven initiative coordinated with SAPS Stock Theft Units (SAPS, 2020)
Membership	Open to all residents, civic groups, NGOs, and local businesses (Ngoveni et al., 2022).	Primarily, livestock farmers, SAPS Stock Theft Unit officers, the Department of Agriculture, and prosecutors (Clack, 2024).
Geographic Focus	Both urban and rural, though uneven in rural implementation (Olofinbiyi & Mthembu, 2020).	Predominantly rural and cross-border farming regions (Masuku & Motlalekgosi, 2022).
Level of Specialisation	Generalist community-safety focus.	Highly specialised knowledge of livestock identification, branding, and syndicate activity (Maluleke, Tshabalala & Tolla, 2021).
Guardianship Orientation	Implicit guardianship over broad crime issues.	Explicit guardianship role: local surveillance, early-warning systems, and deterrence strategies (Clack, 2020)
Perceived Effectiveness	Often criticised as “talk shops” with limited measurable impact in rural areas	When well-resourced and integrated, it can achieve measurable reductions in theft

	(Makondo et al., 2021; Dlamini, 2024).	(e.g., Free State patrols reporting a ~16% drop: IOL, 2025), but success varies with farmer participation and SAPS capacity (Clack, 2024; Maluleke et al., 2014).
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Effectiveness and Interdependence

Cohen and Felson's (1979) routine-activity framework underscores that crime occurs when a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian converge. CPFs provide broad oversight, local Stock Theft Forums supply focused guardianship, and the STPF ensures that field lessons inform national strategy. Where these layers cooperate—sharing data, building trust, and adapting to new theft methods livestock-theft rates can decline (Maluleke, Obioha & Mofokeng, 2014; Maluleke, Tshabalala & Tolla, 2021). Still, all three structures depend on SAPS commitment, adequate resources, and legitimacy. Without regular engagement and timely intelligence, local forums risk becoming symbolic, and national recommendations lose practical relevance.

Based on the literature review, it becomes clear that a gap exists in the existing research, as the Stock Theft Prevention Forums have never been subjected to empirical investigation. While considerable research exists on the functioning and challenges of Community Policing Forums (CPF's), there is a lack of evidence-based insight into how the Stock Theft Prevention Forums operate in practice, how their policies are experienced at the farm level, and how effectively they contribute to livestock theft prevention. The absence of empirical studies limits our understanding of its impact, coordination mechanisms, and relevance to farmers' lived experiences. Addressing this gap is therefore crucial for assessing the effectiveness of the NSTPF and strengthening integrated rural security networks.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Q1. Criminal justice system and recovery rates: How effective and reliable are recovery rates as indicators of SAPS performance, and what do they reveal about community engagement in livestock-theft prevention?

Q2. Farmers' perspectives and community effects: How do farmers perceive livestock-theft trends, key risk factors, and the consequences of theft, and to what extent do their experiences align with SAPS and Stock Theft Prevention Forums data

Q3. Preventive strategies on the ground. Which on-farm and community-based preventative and responsive strategies are most widely used and effective, and how are local patrols and surveillance coordinated with SAPS and the Stock Theft Prevention Forums?

Q4. Policy, legislation, and the Stock Theft Prevention Forums' role. How effective are current laws, policies, and penalties in deterring livestock theft, and how well does the Stock Theft Prevention Forums identify, communicate, and address research and operational needs with relevant institutions?

Q5. Collaboration and knowledge transfer. What best-practice models exist for stakeholder collaboration, and how effective is the Stock Theft Prevention Forums in facilitating knowledge sharing and coordination among farmers, the criminal justice system, and other rural crime-prevention structures?

RESEARCH DESIGN

Rural crime, particularly livestock theft, poses complex challenges that are shaped by structural, social, and spatial dynamics. International scholarship in rural criminology has emphasised that crime in non-urban settings cannot

be fully understood through quantitative data alone, as community experiences, trust, and local social networks strongly influence crime patterns and responses (Barclay & Donnermeyer, 2011; Ceccato & Dolmen, 2013; J. F. Donnermeyer & DeKeseredy, 2013). South African studies corroborate these findings, demonstrating that Community Policing Forums (CPFs) and stock-theft forums often face resource shortages, inconsistent participation, and limited legitimacy, which constrain their effectiveness in addressing highly localised crimes such as livestock theft (Clack, 2024a; Makondo et al., 2021; Maluleke et al., 2016; Zantsi & Nkunjana, 2021). Despite the multi-layered frameworks for rural crime prevention—including CPFs, Stock Theft Information Centres (STICs), and the National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF) there is limited empirical insight into farmers' perceptions, experiences, and engagement with these mechanisms, particularly at the national coordination level.

Building on these international and local insights, a mixed-methods research design is most appropriate for this study. Such a design enables quantitative analysis to measure trends in livestock theft, recovery rates, and forum participation (aligning with research objectives 2 and 3). At the same time, qualitative methods capture farmers' narratives, perceptions, preventative strategies, and awareness of the NSTPF (addressing objectives 1, 4, and 5) (Ceccato, 2016; J. Donnermeyer, 2025). By integrating statistical patterns with lived experiences, the study can offer a comprehensive understanding of both the magnitude and social context of livestock theft in rural South Africa (Donnermeyer, 2025).

Participants were purposively sampled to ensure inclusion of those with direct experience or involvement in livestock theft. These included livestock farmers from commercial and communal sectors across provinces with high incidences of stock theft, members of organised agricultural bodies—including Agri SA, TLU-SA, the Red Meat Producers Organisation, the Red Meat Action Group, and the National Wool Growers Association—and members of the South African Police Service (SAPS), particularly those

in the Stock Theft and Endangered Species Units. Engaging these organisations was critical for accessing dispersed rural populations, building trust, and ensuring legitimacy (Peterson, 2022).

Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire (see Annexure A) administered via Microsoft Forms. Closed-ended questions supported quantitative analysis, while open-ended questions captured qualitative narratives and experiences. Multiple distribution channels were employed to maximise accessibility, including WhatsApp (widely adopted by farmers and SAPS personnel) (Clack, 2015; Harkness et al., 2022; Quan-Haase & Sloan, 2016), email for commercial farmers and organised forum members, and direct liaison with local representatives in areas with limited connectivity. The survey was publicised through agricultural publications, including *Landbouweekblad*, *Farmers Weekly*, *Sunday Times*, and *Maroela Media* (Botha, 2025; Hancke, 2025; Smit, 2025) and was made available in English and Afrikaans to accommodate linguistic diversity (Clack & Bunei, 2025).

Quantitative data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 30), employing descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations to summarise theft trends, recovery rates, and preventative strategies. Qualitative data were analysed in ATLAS.ti using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Harkness, 2017; Peterson et al., 2024). This approach enabled systematic coding, the identification of themes, and a rigorous examination of farmers' narratives regarding risk factors, preventive measures, criminal justice system practices, and the LSTPF's role.

To identify relevant research literature on livestock theft in South Africa, this study utilised the advanced search functionality within the Sabinet database. The search was limited to publications from 1995 onward to align with the establishment of the Livestock Theft Prevention Forums. Using targeted keywords such as "stock theft", the search was refined

through multiple filters, including publication type, journal title, subject collections, language, and accreditation status. Boolean operators, exact phrase matching, and date restrictions were applied to enhance precision and relevance. This strategy enabled the systematic retrieval of peer-reviewed research articles, case reports, and practitioner-focused content across various disciplines, including agriculture, criminology, law, and rural development. The search methodology followed best practices as outlined in Sabinet's official search guide (Sabinet, 2022).

Ethical considerations were a central focus of the study. Approval was obtained from the University of South Africa's College of Law Research Ethics Review Committee, and a pilot study was conducted with SAPS members and crime prevention practitioners to test validity, clarity, and contextual appropriateness (Maxfield & Babbie, 2015). Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained from all respondents, and confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the study. Gatekeeper permission was obtained from the SAPS Research Division, and collaboration with agricultural organisations reinforced legitimacy and broad engagement across multiple provinces (Peterson, 2022).

Overall, this mixed methods design directly addresses the research questions by enabling the study to quantify livestock theft trends and recovery rates, while simultaneously capturing farmers' perceptions, preventive strategies, and awareness of national coordination mechanisms. By integrating statistical evidence with farmers' lived experiences, the design ensures that findings are both empirically robust and contextually grounded, providing actionable insights for policy, policing, and community-based interventions.

Participants Demographics

Demographic Composition and Occupational Representation of Survey Participants

A total of 628 survey responses were received, with 70% completing the Afrikaans survey and 30% completing the English survey. As the home language of the participants was not identified, it can be used as a variable. Respondents represented a range of occupations, with the majority (81%) being livestock producers. Other roles included criminal justice system and crime-related professions, such as SAPS members (4%) (*SAPS members did not complete the questions only applicable to general population*), prosecutors (<1%), auctioneers/agents (2%), abattoir owners/employees (<1%), individuals involved in crime prevention in other capacities (8%), private security for farming communities (2%), and technology developers in crime prevention (1%).

This distribution of roles among respondents is important, as certain questions were tailored to specific groups; for example, SAPS members and Private security personnel were not asked whether they reported crimes, and livestock producers unfamiliar with the Livestock Theft Prevention Forums (LSTPF) were excluded from questions regarding the forums' functioning. Consequently, the number of responses (N) varies across different questions in the analysis. This approach aligns with established survey methodologies in South Africa—for example, the Governance, Public Safety, and Justice Survey (GPSJS) allows for item-specific exclusions to maintain question relevance (Stats SA, 2023). Similarly, the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) employs modular survey routing, where only respondents with relevant experiences or knowledge are asked to answer certain sections (Human Sciences Research Council, 2023)

Provincial Demography of participants

The survey responses exhibited notable variation across provinces. The Free State recorded the highest participation, with 169 respondents, followed by the North West with 148. Mpumalanga (62) and Limpopo (59) demonstrated moderate levels of engagement. Lower participation rates were observed in the Northern Cape (47), KwaZulu-Natal (43), Gauteng (37), and Eastern Cape (36), while the Western Cape had the lowest number of responses, with only 27 participants. This pattern suggests that certain provinces—particularly the Free State and North West—were more actively represented in the survey. In contrast, the relatively low participation from the Western Cape indicates potential regional disparities in survey accessibility, awareness, or interest. The higher participation in some provinces may also reflect more substantial involvement from partner organisations that supported the survey process.

Interestingly, although the chairperson of the National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF) is based in the Western Cape and another executive member represents KwaZulu-Natal, there is no publicly available information on the NSTPF website regarding representatives from the Free State, Eastern Cape, or Northern Cape. This lack of representation may partly account for the uneven participation observed across provinces (Stock Theft Prevention, 2024). Furthermore, the NSTPF website appears outdated, which detracts from its credibility. The contact details listed for police officers are inaccurate, indicating deficiencies in the platform's maintenance and reliability.

Demographics of Representative Organisations

The study sought to capture a broad spectrum of voices across South Africa's agricultural landscape, engaging organisations that represent both commercial and emerging farming communities. The response data, however, reveals a notable demographic skew, with most of the engagement coming from well-established, predominantly Afrikaans-speaking organisations. Respondents collectively selected a total of 938

organisational affiliations, as participants were allowed to indicate membership in all organisations to which they belonged.

AgriSA (239 responses), AfriForum (186), RPO (169), TAU-SA (86), and Solidarity (72) were the most responsive, reflecting strong participation from commercial farming constituencies. These organisations typically represent Afrikaans-speaking, resource-rich demographics with robust organisational structures and access to digital resources. Their high engagement suggests a culture of civic involvement and readiness to participate in policy-related research.

In contrast, several organisations representing marginalised or emerging farmers—such as AFASA, which recorded four responses, while SAFDA, NAFU, BFASA, and NAFLA SA recorded zero responses. These groups often advocate for smallholder, black, or rural farmers, and their absence in the data raises concerns about inclusivity and representation. It may point to systemic challenges such as limited internet access, language barriers, or mistrust in formal research processes. Importantly, various attempts were made to include marginalised voices in the study. Outreach efforts were extended to all listed organisations, and the survey was made available in both Afrikaans and English. This bilingual approach aimed to accommodate linguistic diversity and improve accessibility. Despite these efforts, the response imbalance suggests that further strategies—such as community-based engagement, mobile surveys, or partnerships with grassroots networks—may be necessary to ensure equitable participation. Moderate engagement from SAAI (31) and the Red Meat Action Group (36) reflects more specialised or sector-specific representation, often tied to family farming or livestock interests.

In summary, while the study achieved strong participation from commercial farming organisations, it fell short in capturing the perspectives of marginalised groups. This demographic gap highlights the need for more

inclusive methodologies in future research to ensure that all voices within South Africa's agricultural sector are heard and valued.

Age distribution of participants

The age distribution of participants in the study, which consists of 90% farmers in South Africa, reveals a pronounced ageing trend. A breakdown of the data reveals that over half (approximately 56%) of respondents are older than 55, with the largest single age group being those over 60, who comprise nearly 40% of the total sample. This suggests that the agricultural sector is increasingly dominated by older individuals, many of whom may be nearing retirement. This aligns with other studies in South Africa, such as efforts to attract youth to agriculture (Editor, 2024).

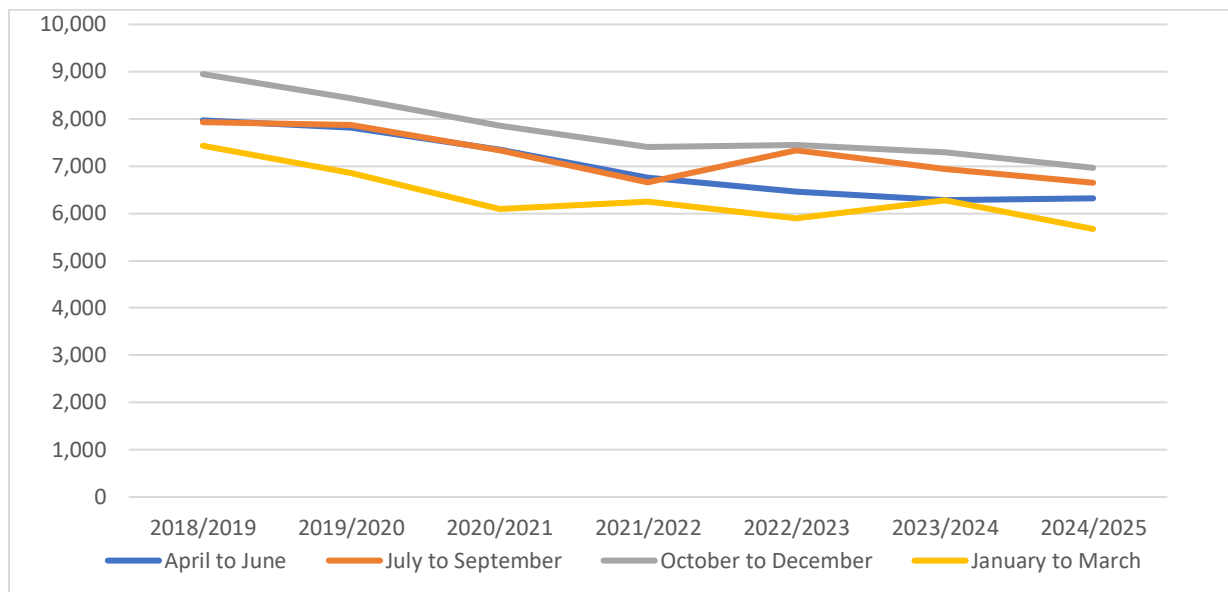
In contrast, younger age groups are significantly underrepresented. Farmers aged 18 to 25 make up 0%, and those between 26 and 35 collectively account for just under 10% of respondents. Even the mid-career brackets—those between 36 and 50 years—show moderate representation, but not enough to offset the ageing curve.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Trends in livestock theft

Livestock theft trends in South Africa, as illustrated in Figure 1, show the number of livestock theft cases reported to the police over six years from 2019/2020 to 2024/2025, broken down by quarters: January to March, April to June, July to September, and October to December. The data allows for a comparative view of seasonal trends in livestock theft, highlighting fluctuations in criminal activity over time. By analysing these trends, it is possible to identify periods of increased risk and to assess whether interventions or policing strategies have had an impact on the frequency of reported thefts.

Figure 1: Number of livestock theft cases reported to the SAPS in South Africa.



Source SAPS Statistics (SAPS, 2025)

Overall, Figure 1 indicates a general decline in livestock theft cases over the five years. The number of cases was highest in the October to December quarter in 2018/2019, starting at around 9,000, but gradually decreased to just under 7,000 by 2024/2025. Similarly, the April to June and July to September quarters showed a steady decline, with slight fluctuations, while the January to March quarter consistently recorded the lowest number of cases throughout the period, falling from approximately 7,500 in 2018/2019 to around 5,500 in 2024/2025.

The general downward trend across all quarters suggests some improvement in livestock security or the effectiveness of criminal justice system measures. Seasonal variation is also evident, with thefts consistently peaking between October and December and remaining at their lowest in the first quarter of the year.

After revealing the livestock theft tendencies through the number of cases reported to the SAPS, it is imperative to use descriptive statistics to

analyse the theft of different species under the auspices of the Stock Theft Prevention forums.

An Analysis of Cattle Theft Across South African Provinces

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 reflect the number of cattle stolen across nine South African provinces, based on six recorded observation years from 2019/20 to 2024/25 per province. The data reveal sharp contrasts in the scale and variability of cattle theft, highlighting provinces where livestock security is a serious challenge and others where the problem is relatively limited.

Table 2 Comparative descriptive statistics of cattle theft across South African Provinces (2019 to 2025)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Eastern Cape	6	8753,00	11979,00	10801,1667	1190,19854
North West	6	5925,00	7180,00	6427,1667	534,43219
Free State	6	7267,00	9634,00	8239,5000	928,18161
Gauteng	6	2107,00	3509,00	2717,3333	632,55187
Mpumalanga	6	7152,00	10107,00	8163,6667	1127,17286
Kwazulu-Natal	6	11987,00	17332,00	14819,1667	2074,35739
Limpopo	6	5237,00	7493,00	6347,1667	839,81889
Northern Cape	6	475,00	922,00	635,8333	160,04676
Western Cape	6	68,00	371,00	208,6667	112,30079

Source: SPSS from SAPS statistics

In Table 2, cattle theft averages (means) point to striking provincial differences. KwaZulu-Natal emerges as the province most affected, with an average of 14,819 cattle stolen, far higher than any other region. The Eastern Cape also reports significant theft, with a mean of 10,801 cattle, placing it in the second-most affected category. A middle cluster of provinces—including the Free State (8,239), Mpumalanga (8,164), North

West (6,427), and Limpopo (6,347)—shows moderate but still considerable cattle theft. At the lowest end, Gauteng (2717), Northern Cape (636), and Western Cape (209) record much smaller figures, with the Western Cape being the least affected by cattle theft.

The standard deviation values provide insight into consistency. While having the highest mean, KwaZulu-Natal also shows a very high standard deviation (2074), indicating that cattle theft figures fluctuate widely across different years. Similarly, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape also record high variability, suggesting theft is unpredictable and possibly influenced by seasonal or situational factors. By contrast, the Western Cape (112) and Northern Cape (160) have very low standard deviations, meaning cattle theft in these provinces remains consistently low.

The data suggest a pattern in which KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape bear the most significant burden of cattle theft, with KwaZulu-Natal as an extreme outlier. Provinces such as the Free State, Mpumalanga, North West, and Limpopo face moderate but concerning levels of theft. On the other hand, Gauteng, Northern Cape, and Western Cape report far lower figures, reflecting either lower cattle populations or different agricultural dynamics. The disparity between KwaZulu-Natal (with an average of over 14,000 cattle stolen) and the Western Cape (with barely 200) illustrates the uneven nature of the problem across the country.

An Analysis of Sheep Theft Across South African Provinces

The descriptive statistics for sheep theft from 2019/20 to 2024/25 across nine South African provinces reveal wide disparities in the scale and distribution of incidents. As with cattle theft, each province has six recorded observations, revealing patterns that shed light on livestock security challenges nationwide.

Table 3: Comparative descriptive statistics of sheep theft across South African Provinces

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Eastern Cape	6	36839,00	50578,00	44324,6667	5461,88333
North West	6	4382,00	7726,00	6355,0000	1418,69602
Free State	6	10917,00	22207,00	18537,6667	4322,44795
Gauteng	6	1814,00	5438,00	4082,0000	1325,84464
Mpumalanga	6	3114,00	5005,00	4098,1667	831,70029
Kwazulu-Natal	6	2240,00	5117,00	3295,6667	1012,87544
Limpopo	6	1293,00	2067,00	1743,0000	316,27014
Northern Cape	6	2521,00	7250,00	3996,6667	1823,53411
Western Cape	6	1631,00	2248,00	1934,1667	265,78218

Source: SPSS from SAPS statistics

Table 3 reveals that the Eastern Cape is the most affected province, with a mean of 44,325 sheep stolen, which is significantly higher than in any other province. This makes it an extreme outlier, reflecting a large sheep population vulnerable to theft or ineffective security measures (Clack, 2024b). The Free State (18,538) is the second-most affected province, but its numbers are less than half of the Eastern Cape's.

A second cluster of provinces includes the North West (6,355), Mpumalanga (4,098), Gauteng (4,082), and Northern Cape (3,997), which report moderate levels of sheep theft. At the lower end, KwaZulu-Natal (3,296), Western Cape (1,934), and Limpopo (1,743) show relatively low averages, suggesting the problem is less severe in these regions.

The standard deviation values indicate the consistency of theft levels within each province. The Eastern Cape (5462) and Free State (4322) have the highest averages and significant variability, meaning sheep theft in these provinces fluctuates widely over time. This indicates unpredictability and potentially significant, sporadic theft incidents.

In contrast, Limpopo (316) and Western Cape (266) report low averages and low variability, reflecting consistently small numbers of sheep

stolen. Other provinces, such as Mpumalanga (832) and KwaZulu-Natal (1013), exhibit moderate variability, indicating that theft occurs regularly but at relatively stable levels.

A striking contrast emerges when comparing provinces. Eastern Cape and Free State dominate sheep theft cases, while most other provinces experience far smaller numbers. This contrasts with the earlier cattle theft data, which showed that KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape were the most affected. For sheep, KwaZulu-Natal is less prominent, ranking lower than several provinces. This suggests that livestock theft is not uniform across animal types: some provinces face a much greater threat of cattle theft, while others are more affected by sheep theft.

An Analysis of Goat Theft Across South African Provinces

The descriptive statistics for sheep theft from 2019/20 to 2024/25 across nine South African provinces reveal wide disparities in the scale and distribution of incidents. As with cattle and sheep theft, each province has six recorded observations, revealing patterns that shed light on the nationwide livestock security challenges.

Table 4: Comparative descriptive statistics of goat theft across South African Provinces

	No of years	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Eastern Cape	6	9932,00	12643,00	10902,8333	991,74461
Free State	6	1790,00	2690,00	2198,3333	321,21436
Mpumalanga	6	3996,00	5149,00	4682,0000	451,56572
Kwazulu-Natal	6	10866,00	15326,00	13194,5000	1489,76478
North West	6	7764,00	10753,00	9002,5000	1069,83433
Limpopo	6	6512,00	9696,00	8528,5000	1527,72206
Gauteng	6	3064,00	5878,00	4042,8333	1003,09589
Northern Cape	6	1212,00	2048,00	1586,1667	321,44823
Western Cape	6	370,00	1095,00	676,6667	273,33472

Source: SPSS by the author

The descriptive statistics in

Table 4 provide valuable insights into the extent and variability of goat theft-related losses across South Africa's nine provinces over a six-year period. The data highlight considerable disparities between provinces in terms of average losses and year-to-year fluctuations. These variations carry important implications for understanding regional vulnerability and designing targeted responses to goat theft.

KwaZulu-Natal is the province most consistently and severely affected by goat theft, recording the highest average losses (mean = 13,194.5). This figure significantly surpasses those of other provinces, pointing to a persistently high level of criminal activity in the region's livestock sector. The cultural context surrounding goat theft in KwaZulu-Natal is particularly concerning, where it is regarded as a serious taboo. Such incidents often provoke intense social repercussions, including violent retaliation within communities and families, and in some cases, the social exclusion or expulsion of the accused (Erasmus, 2018).

Eastern Cape and North West follow closely behind KwaZulu-Natal, with mean losses of 10,902.83 and 9,002.5, respectively. These provinces are considered high-risk areas for goat theft, likely influenced by systemic vulnerabilities and socio-economic pressures. Notably, the national hotspot areas of OR Tambo in the Eastern Cape and Taung and Mogwase in the North West are characterised by high population density and elevated poverty levels. These localised conditions contribute significantly to goat theft in these regions, as economic hardship and limited opportunities increase the risk of criminal activity (Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, 2022).

In contrast, provinces such as Western Cape (mean = 676.67), Northern Cape (mean = 1,586.17), and Free State (mean = 2,198.33) report the lowest average losses. These provinces appear less impacted by goat theft, suggesting either more effective preventative measures or structural

factors—such as lower goat densities or more formalised agricultural practices—that reduce the risk of theft (NAMC, 2023).

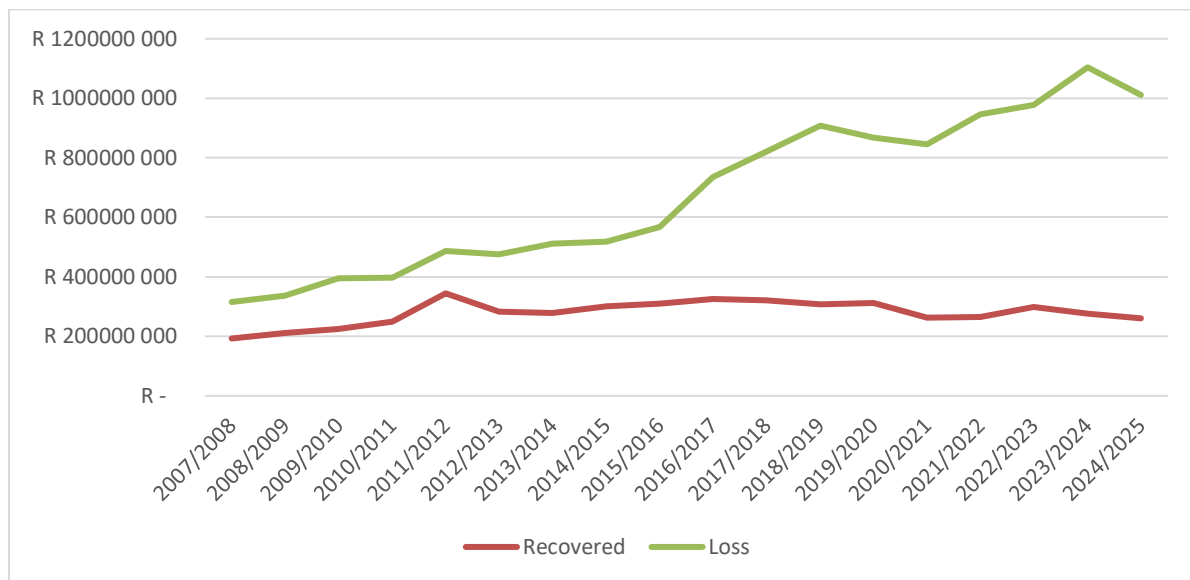
The standard deviation values further enrich the analysis by illustrating the variability in losses over time. Limpopo (SD = 1,527.72) and KwaZulu-Natal (SD = 1,489.76) experience high average losses and significant year-to-year volatility. This suggests that goat theft in these provinces is persistent and unpredictable, posing challenges for the criminal justice system and local farmers. Conversely, provinces such as the Western Cape and the Free State exhibit much lower standard deviations, indicating a more stable and predictable pattern of theft over the examined period.

The findings highlight a notable geographic disparity in goat theft across South Africa. Provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo may benefit from targeted interventions, community involvement, and community-based monitoring systems. However, the community-based monitoring system is questionable due to the costs. If the Eye and Ears system is analysed, it becomes evident that these communities do not have this support (Bulbulia, 2021; SAPS, 2022). Moreover, the informal nature of the goat industry may further complicate prevention efforts, especially as cultural practices and informal trade dominate.

Recovery rates and police performance

Livestock theft is a longstanding problem in South Africa (Heese, 1987) and has been extensively researched from a numerical perspective (W. Clack, 2013, 2016, 2024a; W. Clack & Maluleke, 2024; Clack & Minnaar, 2018; Doorewaard, 2020; Lombard, 2016). Adopting a financial value-focused approach may offer a clearer perspective on the persistence and consequences faced by livestock producers. Figure 1 demonstrates the increasing financial value of stolen livestock over time, with cattle contributing 71.43% to the total, sheep 17.63%, and goats 10.95% to the financial burden.

Figure 2: Trends in Financial Losses and Recoveries (2007/2008 – 2024/2025)



Source (Author calculations from SAPS and NSTPF statistics over the period)

Figure 2 analyses the economic impact of livestock theft on average, revealing that the true crisis lies in the erosion of recovered livestock, thereby worsening the actual impact of theft on the livestock sector.

In 2007/2008, stolen livestock was valued at approximately R300 million, rising to R1.4 billion in 2023/2024, nearly four times the amount over the 16 years. During the annual November meeting of the National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF), the average monetary value of livestock is established, considering current livestock prices and inflation. This value is the basis for calculating the economic impact of livestock theft in the following financial year. The values represent estimates primarily based on the value of female animals. However, they do not encompass the potential loss from future breeding herds and genetic factors (Clack, 2024a). This financial impact is not just a matter of accounting—it has devastating consequences for food production and the livelihoods of rural

communities. The question needs to be asked: What is the psychological impact on farmers (Donnermeyer, 2025)?

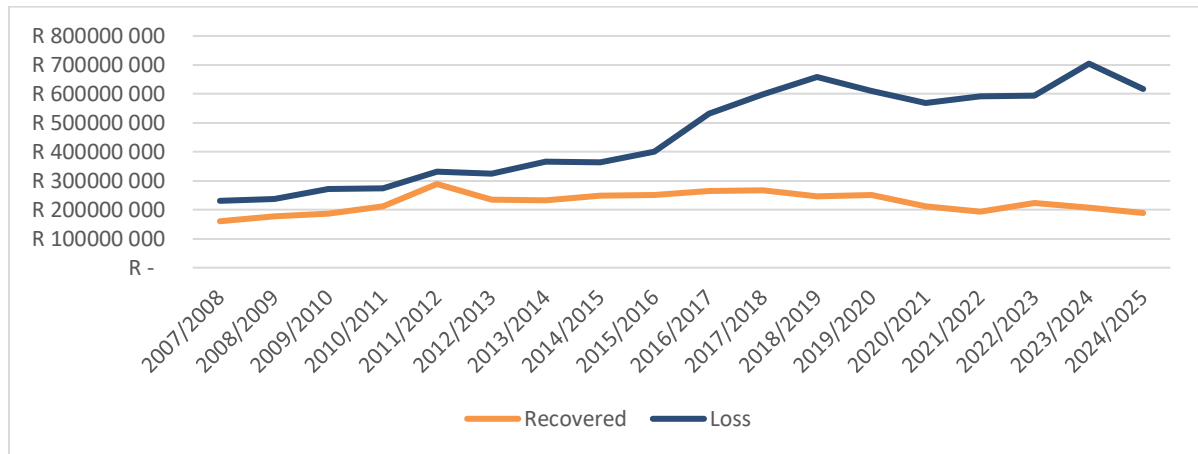
The decrease in 2020/2021 is attributed to the COVID-19 lockdown and movement restrictions, which temporarily reduced incidents; however, the trend rebounded to continue the increasing trend (Clack, 2024a). Consecutively, Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreaks have been plaguing South Africa since 2019 intermittently, since May 2025, affecting consumer beef prices, the most significant component. The outbreak led to a reduced supply of beef for consumers, causing the consumer price of beef to increase sharply by 26.4% compared to the previous year (Schenk, 2025). The impact of FMD may therefore have the opposite effect to Covid-19, despite the movement restrictions imposed (DALLRD, 2025); however, this remains to be seen.

During the period analysed in Figure 1, the recovery rates (both monetary and physical) have remained consistent, averaging between R250 million and R300 million annually. The genuine concern, then, is not only theft but the decline in the effectiveness of livestock recovery. This reflects a worsening recovery rate, meaning that livestock theft today leads to deeper financial wounds than in the past, even if the scale of theft has not truly grown. This stagnation suggests that livestock theft prevention, mitigation, and community engagement are failing miserably. Furthermore, static recovery rates compared to a rise in the value of livestock stock translate into a growing gap and an ever-increasing burden on affected farmers. This is despite the decline in the number of livestock stolen since 2017/2018.

However, analysing livestock theft in general does not provide a comprehensive view of the impact of livestock theft, as not all farmers farm with all species.

Trends in cattle theft, financial losses, and recoveries

Figure 3: Trends in cattle theft financial losses and recoveries (2007/2008 – 2024/2025)



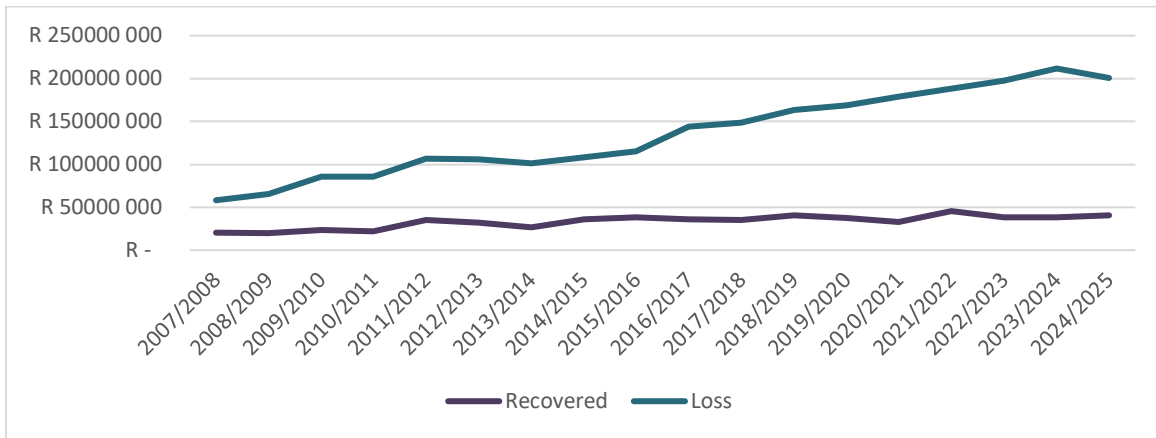
Source Author calculations from SAPS, 2025a, 2025b

Figure 2 provides information regarding the economic losses and recovery of cattle during the period. From 2007 to 2012, the rates were in equilibrium when the gap opened. The monetary recoveries declined in 2012, stagnated below R250 million, and went below R200 million in 2025. A constant decline in recoveries is observed, and the information in Figure 3 is consistent with that in

Figure 2. Furthermore, it is deduced that the decline in the economic losses of cattle does not fully correlate with the overall trends.

Trends in sheep theft, financial losses, and recoveries

Figure 4 Trends in sheep theft financial losses and recoveries (2007/2008 – 2024/2025)



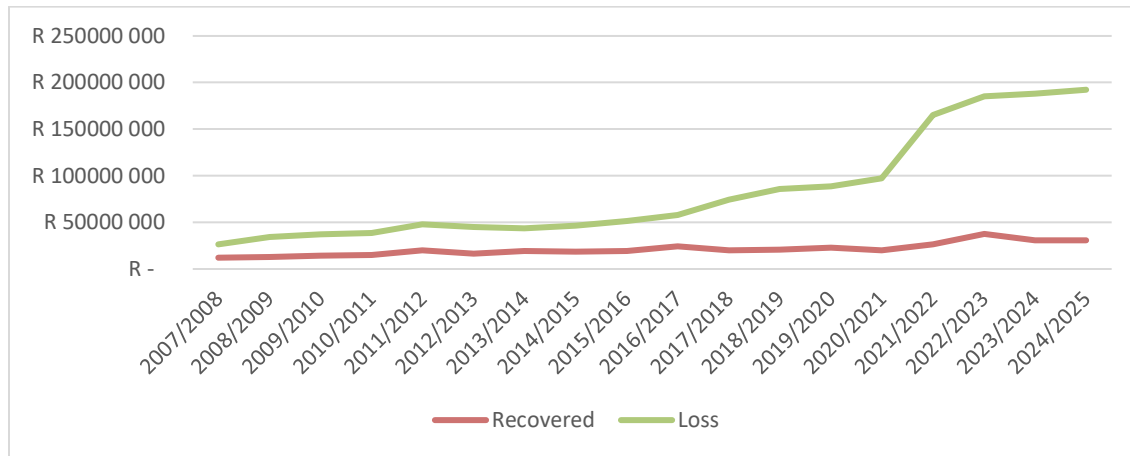
Source (Author calculations from SAPS and NSTPF statistics over the period)

Figure 4 illustrates the economic losses from sheep theft over the period examined. Unlike cattle theft, which has shown a decline since 2020, sheep theft has followed a consistent upward trend in monetary losses. Notably, the decrease observed during the COVID-19 period in the overall trends presented in

Figure 2 is not reflected in the case of sheep theft. This suggests that the pandemic did not reduce sheep theft; on the contrary, incidents appear to have increased during this time. These observations align with the findings reported by Maluleke et al. (2022).

Trends in goat theft financial losses and recoveries

Figure 5: Trends in goat theft financial losses and recoveries (2007/2008 – 2024/2025)



Source (Author calculations from SAPS and NSTPF statistics over the period)

Figure 5 presents data on economic losses from goat theft over the study period. Compared to the trends observed for cattle and sheep (Figures 2 and 3), the trend line for goat theft is particularly striking. Losses remained relatively stable from 2007 to approximately 2017; however, the gap between losses and recoveries steadily widened. A notable and sharp increase in monetary losses occurred in 2021, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic, and this upward trajectory has continued since. These developments suggest that the overall increase in livestock theft-related losses, depicted in

Figure 2, is primarily driven by goat theft in South Africa.

One contributing factor to this trend is the structural difference between the livestock industries. Formal value chains, regulated abattoirs, and commercial processing systems characterise the beef and sheep sectors. In contrast, the goat industry operates predominantly within informal markets. It is estimated that approximately 90% of goats are sold directly between individuals through so-called “rope sales,” rather than via formal marketing channels. (DAFF, 2012; NAMC, 2023). Moreover, while beef and sheep are primarily sold as meat products within regulated supply chains, goats serve significant cultural and ritual purposes, particularly in

rural and communal areas. Live goats are frequently purchased for traditional ceremonies and ancestral sacrifices (Arnoldi, 2025), reinforcing their exclusion from formal market structures.

Livestock Theft Victimisation and Reporting Behaviour Across South African Provinces

The reporting and victimisation patterns associated with livestock theft in South Africa have evolved significantly over the past decade, reflecting both institutional interventions and changes in rural security culture. Clack (2018) presented an in-depth analysis of livestock theft reporting trends between 2010 and 2018, drawing on comparative data from Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) and the South African Police Service (SAPS). This research revealed a substantial and persistent gap between the estimated number of livestock theft incidents and those officially reported to the criminal justice system (Clack, 2016). During the early years of this period, an estimated 77% of livestock theft cases went unreported, indicating widespread underreporting within the agricultural sector. Farmers' reluctance to report theft was primarily attributed to a lack of trust in policing systems, perceptions of inefficiency, and doubts regarding the recovery of stolen livestock. The information was incorporated into the Victims' Crime survey over the period 2010-2018 (Stats SA, 2018). According to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA, 2025), livestock theft statistics were last included in the Victims of Crime Survey in 2018 and were only reintroduced in the 2024/25 survey cycle. In 2018, the survey, based on responses from approximately 30,000 households, estimated 248,637 incidents of livestock, poultry, and other animal thefts (including specific animals, such as dogs, cats, and fish). However, the survey did not specify the geographic distribution of the sampled households, and the methodology used to derive these figures was not clearly outlined. As a Rural Criminologist will argue, it is essential to locate crime in context and specific place (Harkness & Harris, 2016); this lack of methodological transparency raises concerns about the reliability and generalizability of the data. Furthermore, only 41%

of these incidents were reported to the authorities, while 59% went unreported.

Between 2015 and 2018, a significant shift occurred following the launch of a national media campaign by the National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF), in partnership with agricultural unions and the SAPS (Clack, 2019). The campaign emphasised collaboration, transparency, and the importance of formal case reporting. As Clack (2024c) noted, this intervention led to a measurable increase in reported incidents and a reduction in unreported cases, signalling a shift in farmers' attitudes toward the value of police engagement. More recent studies (Clack, 2024c; 2025) confirm a sustained improvement, showing that approximately 80–90% of livestock theft cases are now reported to authorities.

Building upon this national context, the current empirical data provide a provincial analysis of victimisation patterns, reported case volumes, and respondents' reporting behaviour to the police. Across nine provinces, 89.2% of respondents reported being victims of livestock theft, while 86.6% indicated that they had reported the incident to the police. The following **table (Table 5)** summarises these results.

Table 5: Livestock Theft Victimisation, Police Reporting, and Number of cases by Province

	Victims of livestock theft			Cases reported to SAPS			
Province	Victims (Yes)	Total Respondents	% Victimized	Reported to SAPS (Yes)	Total Reporting Responses	% Reported to SAPS	Number of Cases
Eastern Cape	25	29	86.2%	21	27	77.8%	6,640
Free State	151	160	94.4%	136	155	87.7%	3,365
Gauteng	31	35	88.6%	24	32	75.0%	982
KwaZulu-Natal	39	40	97.5%	34	40	85.0%	6,558
Limpopo	39	48	81.3%	36	42	85.7%	2,450
Mpumalanga	41	47	87.2%	38	41	92.7%	3,008

	Victims of livestock theft			Cases reported to SAPS			
Province	Victims (Yes)	Total Respondents	% Victimized	Reported to SAPS (Yes)	Total Reporting Responses	% Reported to SAPS	Number of Cases
Northern Cape	35	43	81.4%	30	36	83.3%	791
North West	126	140	90.0%	117	131	89.3%	3,152
Western Cape	31	39	79.5%	29	33	87.9%	208
Grand Total	518	581	89.2%	465	537	86.6%	27,154

Source: Survey Data

The provincial patterns revealed in Table 5 show a clear relationship between victimisation levels, reported case volumes, and police reporting behaviour. Provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, and North West reported both high levels of victimisation and high police reporting rates, suggesting that regions most affected by livestock theft have also developed stronger formal reporting practices. The Eastern Cape and Gauteng display slightly lower reporting proportions (77.8% and 75%), which may reflect ongoing barriers such as limited police access or residual distrust in criminal justice system mechanisms. Conversely, Mpumalanga demonstrates a notably high reporting rate (92.7%), indicating an effective alignment between victimisation experience and reporting compliance.

Statistical analysis suggests a strong positive correlation ($r \approx 0.7$) between the proportion of victimised respondents and those who reported incidents to the police. This relationship indicates that in provinces where livestock theft is more prevalent, farmers are also more likely to engage with formal reporting structures—an encouraging sign of improved compliance and awareness. Furthermore, a moderately strong correlation ($r \approx 0.6$ – 0.7) persists between provincial case numbers and both victimisation and reporting rates. Although the sample ($n = 9$ provinces) limits inferential precision, a two-tailed significance test suggests that these relationships would be statistically significant at the 90–95% confidence level, providing

reasonable assurance of a genuine association between crime exposure and reporting activity.

In summary, the combined findings reflect a two-phase transformation in South Africa's livestock theft landscape. Historically, the period prior to 2015 was characterised by severe underreporting, limited police engagement, and widespread distrust among farmers (Clack, 2018; Tustin & van Aardt, 2018). However, the subsequent decade has seen a measurable shift toward greater transparency, formal reporting, and institutional cooperation. At the provincial level, high victimisation rates correspond closely with elevated reporting rates and theft case volumes, underscoring both the scale of the problem and the effectiveness of recent awareness and enforcement initiatives. The Red Meat Industry Strategy 2030 has only one action step towards livestock theft prevention: "*Educate on importance of stock theft reporting and animal identification requirements*" (BFAP, 2022, p. 35). These findings underscore the importance of maintaining robust partnerships between the agricultural sector and criminal justice system, sustaining awareness programmes, and expanding rural policing resources to consolidate the progress made in livestock theft prevention and reporting across South Africa. A proper strategy for distributing R2 million in resources to service providers must be developed, and consideration should be given to supporting the provinces or service providers directly. An example is where Gauteng STPF handed over two Axion Thermal Imaging Monoculars, costing R46 000 from member funds to Stock and Endangered Units in Gauteng (21 October 2025)

While the overall trend indicates an improvement in the reporting of livestock theft incidents, the non-reporting raises important questions about where victims turn when they choose not to engage the formal criminal justice system channels. Understanding the alternative entities to whom these incidents are reported provides valuable insight into the informal mechanisms of trust, support, and justice that operate within rural

communities. The following table, Table 6, outlines the primary entities to which victims report livestock theft when SAPS is not approached.

Entities to Whom Matters Are Reported when not reporting to the SAPS

Table 6 shows the alternative entities to which respondents report incidents when they do not report directly to the South African Police Service (SAPS), along with the proportion of reports made to each entity

Table 6: Entities to Whom Matters Are Reported when not reporting to the SAPS

Entities to Whom Matters Are Reported	Percentage
Neighbours	43%
Farm Watch	21%
Private Security Organisation	24%
Control Rooms	10%
RPO (Red Meat Producers Organisation or National Livestock Theft Prevention Forum project)	3%

Source: Survey data

Table 6 summarises the channels through which survey respondents reported matters. It is important to note that this information pertains to only 13% of the total survey participants. Among these respondents, the most reported channel was neighbours (44%), followed by Farm Watch (24%) and private security organisations (19%). Control rooms accounted for 10% of reports, while a small proportion (4%) reported matters to the RPO (Red Meat Producers Organisation or National Livestock Theft Prevention Forum project). This indicates that informal and community-based channels, such as neighbours and Farm Watch, play a significant role in reporting incidents within this subset of respondents.

Crime prevention measures

Closed-Circuit Television Connectivity Data

It is worth noting that, although the survey included 628 respondents, only 409 individuals provided valid responses to the question regarding the

connectivity of the installed Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) systems. The remaining 219 respondents either did not answer or indicated that they were unfamiliar with the system's configuration. Therefore, the analysis presented here is based solely on the responses of those 409 participants who demonstrated awareness of the CCTV system's connectivity.

Among these informed respondents, the largest group—140 individuals (34.2%)—reported that their CCTV systems are connected to a Professional Security Company. This suggests a significant reliance on formal, possibly more comprehensive security services. The second most common response, provided by 110 individuals (26.9%), indicated connectivity to the Farmers Union, reflecting the importance of community-based security structures, particularly in rural or agricultural contexts.

A further 83 respondents (20.3%) stated that their systems are linked to a Local Security Company, which may represent smaller, regionally operated firms. Additionally, 39 individuals (9.5%) reported that their systems are managed by one or two administrators, implying a more informal or internal oversight arrangement.

Notably, 27 respondents (6.6%) indicated that they do not know to whom their systems are connected, while 10 respondents (2.4%) expressed no idea at all. These figures highlight a degree of uncertainty or lack of communication regarding security infrastructure among a subset of users.

In conclusion, the data reveal a predominant reliance on professional and community-based security services among those who are aware of their CCTV system's connectivity. However, the presence of a substantial number of uninformed respondents underscores the need for improved user education and transparency in the management of surveillance systems.

Perceptions of Crime in Farming Areas Post-CCTV Installation

According to Newham and Lancaster (2025), independent inquiries and national analyses show that while violent incidents occur on farms, there is no evidence of an organised campaign or genocide targeting white farmers in South Africa. The authors note that most farm attacks are motivated by robbery rather than racial hatred, and that white South Africans are statistically less likely to experience violent crime compared to other groups.

In the 2023–2024 financial year, there were 49 murders on farms, accounting for only 0.2% of the 27,621 murders recorded nationally. Although farm attacks receive significant media and political attention, they represent a small proportion of total homicides. The South African Police Service (SAPS) crime statistics for rural areas are regarded as reliable under the Rural Safety Strategy (RSS). Between 2016 and 2021, the conviction rate for farm murders (18%) was somewhat higher than the national average of 13%, though both rates remain low.

A current survey, conducted among 628 participants, assessed perceptions of crime in farming areas following the installation of CCTV systems. Of these, 402 respondents provided valid feedback regarding changes in crime patterns.

Contact Crimes

Most respondents perceived a reduction in contact crimes such as assault and murder:

- 33.7% (135 respondents) reported that contact crimes had reduced slightly.
- 27.9% (112 respondents) indicated a significant reduction.
- 30.8% (123 respondents) observed no change.
- A small minority (7.6%) reported an increase (3.8% slight; 3.8% significant).

Overall, over 61% of respondents perceived a decline in contact crimes, suggesting that CCTV systems have a positive influence on perceptions of personal safety and the deterrence of violent crime in rural communities.

These findings align with Newham and Lancaster's (2025) observations that targeted safety initiatives, improved police intelligence, and coordinated partnerships under the RSS can strengthen both actual and perceived security in farming areas. In an anonymous personal communication (September 2025) and a study by SAPS (2022), this tendency was confirmed from a rural perspective, as noted in E2.

Economic Crimes

Livestock theft and related property crimes continue to pose a significant challenge for South Africa's agricultural sector, often described as a serious economic crime with profound human consequences. As highlighted by Gelderblom (2025) in the article "Veediefstal – 'n hartverskeurende tragedie sonder gevolge", the theft of livestock inflicts severe economic, emotional, and psychological harm on farmers and their families. Beyond the immediate financial losses, these crimes undermine farmers' livelihoods, erode confidence in rural safety systems, and contribute to persistent anxiety among agricultural communities (Clack, 2024c).

These insights resonate with findings from a survey of 628 participants, of whom 402 respondents provided valid feedback on their perceptions of crime trends following the installation of CCTV systems in their farming areas. Responses concerning economic crimes—which include theft, burglary, and livestock theft—were mixed but generally optimistic. A majority of 58.3% perceived a reduction in economic crimes, with 34.0% reporting a slight reduction and 24.3% observing a significant decline. However, 26.2% indicated no change, and 15.5% reported increases in such crimes, suggesting that improvements were uneven across communities. The findings of a journalist in the Free State support these findings. (Herselman, 2025).

These results suggest that while CCTV systems may enhance deterrence and detection, they cannot, by themselves, resolve the broader structural and systemic issues underlying economic crimes in rural areas. The persistence of livestock theft, as described by Gelderblom (2025), highlights deeper challenges, including weak criminal justice system capacity, limited rural policing resources, and the organised nature of certain criminal syndicates. Furthermore, social and economic pressures in surrounding communities often sustain the demand for stolen goods, perpetuating cycles of theft and loss (Clack & Maluleke, 2024).

Overall, the findings suggest that technological interventions, such as CCTV surveillance, can have a positive impact on perceptions of safety and crime reduction. However, they must be integrated with stronger investigative systems, community–police cooperation, and effective prosecution mechanisms (Anonymous, personal communication, September 2025). Without such comprehensive measures, farmers may continue to face what Gelderblom (2025) and many others aptly describe as a “heartbreaking tragedy without consequence”—a situation where crime persists despite awareness, and justice remains elusive. Overall, the data indicate that the installation of CCTV systems is perceived to have a positive impact on crime reduction, particularly in relation to contact crimes. However, the mixed responses regarding economic crimes highlight the need for complementary security measures and further investigation into local crime dynamics. The following serves as an example of successes of the use of technology in the Free State Province.

Technological Integration in the Prevention and Investigation of Livestock Theft in the Free State

A review of livestock theft investigations across the Free State (January–October 2025) highlights the critical impact of technology, data integration, and inter-agency collaboration. Cooperation between the South African Polygraph & Investigation Services (SAPIS), the Stock Theft

and Endangered Species (STES) Unit, SAPS, and private agricultural networks has led to major arrests, recoveries, and the disruption of organised stock theft syndicates.

Steynsrus and Potchefstroom. In Steynsrus (Crime Administration System (CAS) 10/10/2025), SAPIS analytics identified a suspect vehicle soon after 16 sheep were stolen. Joint operations led to 14 carcasses recovered and one arrest. The same vehicle was linked to other cases in Steynsrus and Edenville. In Potchefstroom (CAS 173/09/2025), SAPIS monitoring exposed a Sasolburg-based syndicate. Two suspects were arrested, four cattle recovered, and the case was connected to several Steynsrus cases.

Tweespruit and Lindley Linked investigations (CAS 27/07/2025 and CAS 136/06/2025) used SAPIS tracking to locate stolen cattle in Tweespruit. The operation resulted in five arrests, recovery of 17 cattle worth R300,000, and seizure of two vehicles and branding irons. The suspects were tied to additional cases across multiple towns.

Theunissen and Welkom Districts In Theunissen (CAS 136/06/2025), SAPIS data linked several night-time slaughter operations to a Thabong-based butchery owner. Coordinated surveillance led to the arrest of five individuals and revealed connections to at least ten crime scenes.

In Mafube (CAS 25/06/2025) and Koppies (CAS 53/02/2025), SAPIS Oryx detected a suspect vehicle, leading to an interception with Ballid Security and STES Vrede. Forty-two sheep and three lambs were recovered; four suspects from a syndicate were arrested.

Wepener In Wepener (CAS 59/05/2025), SAPIS/Agri surveillance identified a vehicle and trailer used to steal 16 cattle and six calves. Rapid coordination between STIC, STES, and SAPS led to two arrests and the recovery of all calves valued over R250,000.

Bothaville In Bothaville (CAS 178/01/2025), community surveillance and SAPIS intelligence led to the arrest of two former employees and the recovery of 20 stolen sheep.

The findings from these example investigations can theoretically be interpreted through several criminological and policing theories that explain how technology and inter-agency collaboration reduce rural crime.

Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) posits that crime occurs when a motivated offender encounters a suitable target in the absence of a capable guardian. The integration of SAPIS technologies, surveillance networks, and rapid data analysis effectively introduces capable guardianship, disrupting the convergence of offenders and targets. By monitoring vehicles, suspects, and movement patterns in real-time, the likelihood of detection and intervention increases significantly.

Situational Crime Prevention Theory (Clarke, 1995) emphasises reducing crime opportunities through environmental and situational controls. The implementation of SAPIS tracking, branding identification, and camera monitoring in rural areas increases the effort and risk required to commit livestock theft while reducing the potential reward. This approach aligns directly with Clarke's five key principles: increasing risks, increasing effort, reducing rewards, reducing provocations, and removing excuses.

Crime Pattern Theory (Brantingham, 2010) focuses on how criminal activities are shaped by spatial and environmental factors. The identification of recurring hotspots—such as Steynsrus, Theunissen, and Tweespruit—illustrates the existence of predictable offender routes and target zones. SAPIS intelligence facilitates the analysis of these spatial patterns, enabling proactive deployment and targeted enforcement strategies.

Intelligence-Led Policing (Ratcliffe, 2016) is a management philosophy that prioritises information and analysis to guide decision-making and resource allocation. The Free State investigations demonstrate the implementation of ILP in practice: technology-driven data collection supports predictive analysis, strategic targeting of syndicates, and efficient operational planning. Collaboration among SAPIS, STES, SAPS, and private security exemplifies an intelligence-led model that emphasises prevention over reaction.

Other Crime Prevention Tools in the Farming Community

The analysis of other crime prevention tools used in the farming community reveals a strong preference for digital communication platforms, particularly WhatsApp. With 498 users, WhatsApp groups account for approximately 71.35% of the total responses, making it the most widely adopted tool for community-based crime prevention. It is worth noting that a respondent may choose more than one option.

In the old Commando System of South Africa, Marnet was the name of a radio communication system used as a backup when telephone lines failed (*Commando System (South Africa) - Wikipedia*, n.d.). Today, after the disbandment of the Commandos (Steinberg, 2005), Marnet radios remain the second most popular option, used by 138 individuals, representing 19.77% of the respondents. This suggests that traditional communication methods remain relevant, particularly in areas where digital access is limited or where radio communication is more reliable.

Telegram and Facebook groups are significantly less utilised, with only 38 and 8 users, respectively, corresponding to 5.44% and 1.15% of the total. These platforms may not be as accessible or preferred by the farming community, possibly due to lower penetration or usability compared to WhatsApp.

A small portion of respondents (16 individuals, 2.29%) indicated the use of other unspecified methods, suggesting that there may be niche or localised tools in use that were not captured in the main categories.

Use of Technology in Livestock Theft Prevention at the Farmer Level

Livestock theft poses a persistent threat to farming operations, prompting the adoption of innovative technological solutions to safeguard farm assets. In South Africa, farmers increasingly rely on GPS-enabled tracking systems, intelligent surveillance, and integrated security solutions to mitigate this risk effectively. These technologies have transformed traditional livestock management by enabling real-time monitoring and rapid response to suspicious activities.

Among the most widely implemented tools are GPS livestock collars, with FarmRanger emerging as a leading provider. FarmRanger collars are attached to individual animals or representative members of a herd or flock, enabling farmers to continuously monitor movement patterns. When abnormal activity is detected—such as unusual movement or potential theft attempts—the system immediately sends alerts to farmers' mobile devices. This early-warning capability enables prompt intervention, minimising losses and ensuring the security of livestock. Currently, FarmRanger protects over three million animals across more than 2,000 farms in South Africa, with clients reporting multiple alerts per month, highlighting both the ongoing vigilance required and the effectiveness of the technology in safeguarding assets (FarmRanger – Livestock Security Collars, n.d.; personal communication, October 2025).

Other notable solutions complementing FarmRanger include the GPS tracking systems developed by Agri-Alert in Potchefstroom and the iSi-TAG device. Agri-Alert specialises in sensor technologies tailored to localised farming conditions, enabling precise tracking of livestock and facilitating faster detection of irregular events ((Home - Agri-Alert, n.d.); personal communication, October 2025). The iSi-TAG device provides lightweight,

real-time GPS monitoring, suitable for various types of livestock, thereby adding further versatility to theft prevention strategies (*iSi-TAG from iSiTech: Real-Time Livestock and Wildlife Management*, n.d.). Collectively, these systems enhance farmers' ability to monitor their animals at a granular level, improving both security and operational management simultaneously.

In addition to GPS-based monitoring, integrated farm security solutions have been introduced to provide a more comprehensive approach. These solutions combine intelligent fencing, AI-enhanced video surveillance, and solar-powered monitoring systems to extend protection beyond individual animals to the broader farm environment (*Integrating Farming and Security Solutions for Productivity - Issue 8 2023 - Security BIS - SMART Security Solutions*, n.d.). Recent advances include facial recognition technology specifically designed for cattle identification, enabling precise verification of ownership without requiring physical interference. Such innovations not only deter theft but also improve overall herd management by providing accurate data on animal location and behaviour (*Agri Facial Recognition – South Africa*, n.d.).

The adoption of these technologies depends heavily on awareness and accessibility. Research indicates that educational outreach and farmer support programs are crucial for promoting the adoption of advanced security solutions, particularly among smallholder farmers who may not typically have access to such solutions (Bontsa et al., 2023). By integrating technology with established farming practices, farmers can create a secure and responsive system that strengthens the resilience of their operations.

In conclusion, technological innovations have become an essential component of livestock theft prevention in South Africa. Through GPS tracking, AI-assisted surveillance, and integrated security systems, farmers can protect their livestock more effectively while enhancing operational oversight. However, it is notable that none of the companies providing

these advanced solutions—such as FarmRanger, Agri-Alert, or iSiTech—are formal members of the livestock theft prevention forums. Their exclusion from these collaborative initiatives highlights a gap between technological providers and coordinated community-level prevention efforts, suggesting an opportunity for greater integration in the future.

Awareness of Livestock Theft Prevention Forums by Province

The survey assessed awareness of Livestock Theft Prevention Forums (LTPFs) among livestock producers across nine provinces in South Africa. Of the 504 respondents, 245 (48.6%) indicated that they were aware of the centres, while 259 (51.4%) reported that they were not aware, indicating moderate overall awareness.

Awareness levels varied notably across provinces.

Table 7 shows that Mpumalanga (56.1%) and North West (55.7%) recorded the highest awareness, whereas the Northern Cape (28.1%) and KwaZulu-Natal (35.1%) had the lowest. Other provinces, including Eastern Cape (46.4%), Gauteng (48.0%), Limpopo (44.7%), Western Cape (41.7%), and Free State (51.7%), showed intermediate awareness levels. These results highlight provincial disparities in awareness and suggest a need for targeted outreach in regions with lower awareness.

Table 7. Awareness of Livestock Theft Prevention Forums by Province

Province	Awareness numbers		Awareness percentages		
	Not Aware (No)	Aware (Yes)	Total	% Aware	% Not Aware
Eastern Cape	15	13	28	46.4%	53.6%
Free State	70	75	145	51.7%	48.3%
Gauteng	13	12	25	48.0%	52.0%
KwaZulu-Natal	24	13	37	35.1%	64.9%
Limpopo	21	17	38	44.7%	55.3%
Mpumalanga	18	23	41	56.1%	43.9%
Northern Cape	23	9	32	28.1%	71.9%
North West	54	68	122	55.7%	44.3%
Western Cape	21	15	36	41.7%	58.3%
Total	259	245	504	48.6%	51.4%

These findings indicate that while nearly half of the producers are aware of LTPFs, substantial gaps exist in specific provinces. Targeted awareness campaigns in the Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal may enhance the effectiveness of LTPFs and support broader livestock theft prevention strategies.

The analysis of awareness of Livestock Theft Prevention Forums (LTPFs) provides important context for interpreting subsequent findings on actual involvement. Since participation in these forums presupposes some level of awareness, respondents who were not aware of the LTPFs were excluded from the following questions on involvement. Consequently, the analysis of involvement in livestock theft prevention reflects only those respondents who had knowledge of the forums and could therefore engage meaningfully in related activities. This distinction ensures that the discussion of involvement focuses on informed participants, providing a more accurate representation of active engagement within the livestock theft prevention framework.

Analysis of Involvement in Livestock Theft Prevention

The data on involvement in livestock theft prevention provides valuable insight into the extent and nature of participation across different levels of the prevention system. Respondents were allowed to select more than one option, so the total number of responses (623) exceeds the number of individuals who participated. This overlap indicates that many respondents are involved in multiple forms of livestock theft prevention, reflecting an interconnected network of community, agricultural, and institutional engagement.

Livestock theft remains a significant challenge in South Africa, prompting the development of a structured, multi-tiered prevention framework. This system is designed to facilitate coordination, intelligence sharing, and strategic oversight across various levels of society and government. At the foundation of this framework are the Local Stock Theft and Endangered Species Information Centres (STICs). These centres are situated at the police station level and represent the most numerous and grassroots-oriented component of the system. Their primary function is to foster local intelligence exchange and coordination among stakeholders. Above the STICs are the Provincial Stock Theft Prevention Forums (PSTPFs), one in each of South Africa's nine provinces. These forums serve as intermediaries, linking local efforts with broader provincial strategies and providing oversight and support. At the apex of the system is the National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF), which consolidates provincial input to guide national policy and strategic direction (Clack, 2015; SAPS, 2020).

This hierarchical structure inherently results in broader participation at the local level, with increasingly representative and limited involvement at the provincial and national tiers. This pattern is reflected in the data presented in Table 8, which outlines the involvement of various stakeholders in preventing livestock theft.

Table 8: Involvement in Livestock Theft Prevention

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Organised agriculture	274	44.0%
Civic community organisations	125	20.1%
Not involved	114	18.3%
Local Stock Theft and Endangered Species Information Centre (STIC)	54	8.7%
Provincial Stock Theft Prevention Forum (PSTPF)	26	4.2%
National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF)	7	1.1%
Other (crime analysts, technology companies, private security, etc.)	23	3.7%
Total	623	100%

The data in Table 8. Livestock theft remains a significant challenge in South Africa, prompting the development of a structured, multi-tiered prevention framework. This system is designed to facilitate coordination, intelligence sharing, and strategic oversight across various areas. Organised agriculture (44.0%) and civic community organisations (20.1%) constitute the primary pillars of engagement, underscoring the grassroots nature of the prevention efforts. Notably, 18.3% of respondents reported no involvement, indicating a potential area for expanding participation and awareness. Engagement in formal forums diminishes progressively up the hierarchy: 8.7% at the local STIC level, 4.2% at the provincial level, and only 1.1% at the national level. This trend aligns with the framework's design, where fewer individuals are involved at higher levels due to the representative nature of these forums.

The "Other" category (3.7%), which includes crime analysts, technology companies, and private security firms, highlights an emerging trend toward collaboration with specialised and technologically advanced actors. This suggests a shift toward more modern and integrated approaches to preventing livestock theft.

Despite the potential for widespread local engagement, a significant gap exists between the formal framework and actual community-level

involvement. The South African Police Service (SAPS) categorises its 1,159 precincts into three categories: urban (253), rural-urban/mixed (484), and rural (422). Based on National Instruction 3 of 2020, this classification implies the possibility of establishing 906 STICs nationwide. However, only 94 operational STIC units currently exist, and it remains unclear whether each unit has an active STIC. Furthermore, only 54 respondents indicated involvement at the STIC level, revealing a disconnect between the intended structure and real-world participation.

In conclusion, livestock theft prevention in South Africa should be driven from the ground up, with strong involvement from agricultural and community networks. While provincial and national forums play essential strategic roles, the limited engagement at these levels reflects their representative nature. The inclusion of private and technological partners signals a promising evolution toward more sophisticated and collaborative prevention strategies. Nonetheless, bridging the gap between formal structures and actual community involvement remains a critical challenge for enhancing the effectiveness of the framework.

Analysis of Livestock Theft Prevention Forums (STICS) Participation and Effectiveness at the Local Level

The Livestock Theft Prevention Forums, also known as Stock Theft and Endangered Species Information Centres (STICS), are designed to facilitate collaboration among livestock owners, law enforcement, prosecutors, and agricultural organisations. Their purpose is to promote information sharing, strengthen rural policing, and enhance the early detection and prevention of livestock theft (SAPS, 2020).

At the national level, the National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF) meets twice a year, while provincial forums convene on a seasonal or biannual basis (Clack, 2015). Given this structure, local forums are expected to meet more regularly to ensure consistent engagement with communities. However, survey data from 608 respondents indicate that this

expectation is not being met, revealing considerable weaknesses in local-level participation, communication, and visibility.

Regularity of Local Meetings

Table 9 presents respondents' perceptions of the regularity and consistency of STICS meetings in their local areas. It highlights the frequency of these meetings, ranging from very regular to rarely or never, providing an overview of local engagement and operational consistency.

Table 9: Frequency of Regular Local Meetings

Response	Number of responses	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Nothing / No information	477	78.5%	78.5%
Always	48	7.9%	86.4%
Often	27	4.4%	90.8%
Sometimes	20	3.3%	94.1%
Rarely	29	4.8%	98.9%
Never	7	1.2%	100%
Total	608	100%	-

Table 9 illustrates respondents' perceptions regarding the frequency and regularity of local STICS meetings. A significant 78.5% of respondents reported having no knowledge of whether meetings occur. Only 7.9% stated that meetings "always" take place, and a further 4.4% indicated that they occur "often."

This lack of awareness suggests that local forums are either not meeting regularly or that information about their meetings is not reaching community members. Given that national and provincial forums meet less frequently by design, it is expected that local STICs should maintain more consistent contact with their communities (SAPS, 2020). The apparent communication breakdown undermines the operational effectiveness of STICS and indicates a lack of visibility at the grassroots level, where prevention efforts are most crucial.

Stakeholder Participation at the Local Level

Table 10 summarises responses regarding the involvement of farmers, police officers, prosecutors, and agricultural organisations.

Table 10: Participation of Relevant Role Players

Response	Number of responses	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Nothing / No information	310	51.0%	51.0%
Yes (actively involved)	98	16.1%	67.1%
Sometimes	108	17.8%	84.9%
No	62	10.2%	95.1%
Seldom	30	4.9%	100.0%
Total	608	100%	-

Table 10 summarises perceptions of stakeholder involvement — including farmers, police officers, prosecutors, and agricultural organisations — in local forums. Over half of respondents (51%) reported having no information about stakeholder involvement. Only 16.1% observed active participation, and 17.8% noted occasional engagement.

These findings suggest limited knowledge, weak coordination, and limited visibility among critical stakeholders. Since the success of STICS depends on collaborative participation, particularly from the SAPS and farmers, this inconsistency poses a serious threat to the intended functionality of the system. Without regular, active engagement from these actors, information sharing and collective problem-solving — both essential for deterring livestock theft — are severely constrained.

Community Attendance and Participation

Table 11 summarises how often respondents participate in local meetings and activities.

Table 11: Attendance and Participation

Response	Number of responses	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Nothing / No information	428	70.4%	70.4%%
Monthly	65	10.7%	81.1%
Seasonal	80	13.2%	94.1%
Weekly	4	0.7%	94.8%
Yearly	10	1.6%	96.4%
Rarely	5	0.8%	97.2%
Never	16	2.6%	100.0%
Total	608	100%	-

The data in Table 11 examines the frequency of community participation in STICS meetings and related activities. 70.4% of respondents indicated no knowledge or participation in local meetings. Only 10.7% reported monthly attendance, and 13.2% participated on a seasonal basis. Very few attendees were present weekly (0.7%) or yearly (1.6%), with negligible numbers citing rare or no attendance at all. However, this will be determined by the severity of livestock theft in a particular area.

These findings suggest that community involvement is minimal. Given that STICS are intended to be community-driven platforms, this level of non-participation is highly concerning. It indicates that residents either lack awareness of the forums or do not perceive them as valuable or accessible.

While the SAPS directive (SAPS, 2020) frames these centres as informal arrangements that may vary depending on local needs and exposure to livestock theft, the data nonetheless reveal a disconnect between policy intent and on-the-ground implementation. Without active community

participation, the forums cannot serve as effective mechanisms for information exchange or grassroots mobilisation against stock theft.

Integrated Analysis: Linking the Three Dimensions

When analysed together, the three dimensions — meeting regularity, stakeholder participation, and community engagement reveal a systemic breakdown in local-level implementation:

- **Information and Communication Deficit:** The overwhelming lack of awareness about meetings and stakeholder activities indicates poor communication and dissemination of information. This weakens trust and limits community buy-in.
- **Weak Institutional Collaboration:** Limited stakeholder involvement reflects insufficient coordination between law enforcement, farmers, and supporting agencies. This results in fragmented efforts and a lack of unified strategy against livestock theft.
- **Low Community Mobilisation:** Minimal attendance suggests that the forums have failed to cultivate ownership or participation among those most affected by livestock theft. Without local engagement, prevention efforts remain top-down and unsustainable.

The data thus point to a misalignment between policy design and practical execution. While the national framework provides for a strong collaborative model, local-level implementation lacks consistency, visibility, and accountability. As a result, the intended flow of information between communities and SAPS, essential for early detection and coordinated responses, remains largely absent.

Analysis of Community Satisfaction with Livestock Theft Prevention Forums in South Africa

The persistence of livestock theft in South Africa remains a critical issue undermining rural livelihoods, food security, and trust in law enforcement.

To address this problem, several collaborative structures, including the National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF), Provincial Stock Theft Prevention Forums (PSTPFs), and Stock Theft Information Centres (STICs), were established. These platforms aim to coordinate responses between farmers, police, and agricultural organisations. However, their effectiveness ultimately depends on the level of community trust and satisfaction. Data from a survey of 600 respondents provides valuable insights into how these forums are perceived by those most affected by livestock theft.

Community Perceptions and Levels of Satisfaction

The survey results reveal a generally negative perception of the livestock theft prevention forums. The most significant proportion of respondents, 243 individuals, indicated that they were very dissatisfied with the performance of these forums, while a further 45 respondents were somewhat dissatisfied. Together, these two categories account for approximately 56% of the total responses, showing that most participants view the forums as ineffective.

In contrast, only a small minority expressed satisfaction. Eighty-seven respondents reported being somewhat satisfied, while twenty-four respondents stated they were very satisfied. These two groups combined represent approximately 22% of the total, indicating that only about one-fifth of the surveyed community members hold positive views of the forums. The remaining respondents expressed neutrality or uncertainty: 56 indicated a neutral stance, while 22 chose neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Additionally, several participants admitted to being unaware of any actions taken by the forums or stated that they were not aware of them. This uncertainty and lack of awareness collectively account for another 22% of the responses.

In the qualitative sections of the survey, the most frequently mentioned theme in the survey responses is the need for improved police involvement. Farmers and community members consistently call for better visibility, accountability, and investigation of livestock theft cases. Many

believe that current efforts by the SAPS are insufficient, with cases often being poorly handled or not pursued at all. As one respondent put it: "SAPS needs to be held accountable for poor involvement in the structures.". Another added: "Nie aktief in ons area. Veediefstal volgens my probeer hul bes. Die howe laat die mense weer vry. Verder verskaf die staat nie genoeg voertuie en hulpbronne aan die personeel nie."

Interpretation of Findings

The predominance of dissatisfaction suggests that the forums have struggled to demonstrate tangible results in reducing livestock theft or building community confidence, or as envisaged in the establishment of community policing forums and the forums themselves (Minnaar, 2010; Mistry, 1997; SAPS, 2020). What is also apparent is that the community blame the police for the poor involvement. Many rural residents appear to believe that these structures have limited practical impact on their daily lives. Several possible explanations may account for this perception. Firstly, communication between the forums, SAPS, and local farmers may be inadequate, leaving community members unaware of the forums' initiatives or achievements. Secondly, limited SAPS capacity, slow response times, and weak prosecution of livestock theft cases may have eroded confidence in the system (as reported by various respondents). In an interview with a police officer, the following remark was made and needs to be elaborated:

"Most livestock producers have a lack of trust in the police. We need to ask the question: what exactly do they distrust? Is it because they regard the police as incapable of doing their job, or because of perceived corruption within the police?"

If they believe the police cannot do their job, then we must ask whether they themselves are trained to do the work of an officer, or are these the individuals who did not make it into the police force and now sit on the outside criticising those who did? This

question becomes even more interesting when considered in the context of South Africa's history of compulsory military training."

Lastly, the forums may not be sufficiently inclusive or participatory, leading to a sense that they operate as bureaucratic bodies rather than as active, community-driven platforms for problem-solving.

In response to these challenges, respondents suggested several measures to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of the forums. For instance, Respondent 74 proposed that all races should be represented at the National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF) to ensure diversity and inclusivity. Furthermore, representatives of the NSTPF should be appointed in all 54 districts across the country to enhance local accountability and coverage. The respondent also recommended that the NSTPF target identified hotspot areas and ensure that Stock Theft Information Centres (STICs) are fully functional and effective. Additionally, complaints should not be raised outside of the NSTPF structures, thereby strengthening internal processes and oversight. Finally, representatives should provide comprehensive reports during NSTPF meetings, including updates on the status of STICs across all districts within their respective provinces.

Similarly, Respondent 5 emphasised the need to stop treating the Forum merely as an accountability session, suggesting that meetings should focus more on collaborative problem-solving, capacity building, and strategic planning rather than solely on reporting and evaluation. This perspective reinforces the broader concern that for the forums to be effective, they must move beyond procedural discussions and foster genuine partnerships and community-driven action against livestock theft. The high proportion of respondents who were unaware of the forums or unsure about their effectiveness highlights a serious communication and outreach problem. Awareness is a prerequisite for participation, and participation is essential for trust-building. If nearly a quarter of respondents are unaware of the forums' existence or actions, it implies that the forums are failing to reach a

significant portion of their target population. This lack of visibility may further exacerbate perceptions of inefficiency and alienation.

The very low number of respondents who described themselves as very satisfied—only 24 individuals out of 600—indicates a profound lack of confidence in the current livestock theft prevention strategy. Such low satisfaction levels suggest that the forums' efforts have not yet translated into noticeable or sustained improvements in security for farmers and livestock owners. This finding underscores the need for reform and revitalisation of these collaborative structures.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The survey data have clear implications for both policymakers and the leadership of livestock theft prevention forums. First, there is a need to strengthen the visibility and transparency of the LSTPFs. Regular communication with communities—through meetings, local radio, newsletters, or mobile messaging—could help to increase awareness and accountability. Second, forums should focus on measurable results, such as reducing the number of reported theft cases or improving recovery rates of stolen livestock, to rebuild public confidence. Third, greater collaboration between police officers, traditional leaders, and farmer associations could make prevention strategies more locally relevant and trusted.

In addition, establishing feedback mechanisms that allow community members to share concerns, report thefts, or suggest interventions may create a stronger sense of ownership. When rural citizens see that their voices are heard and their participation valued, satisfaction and trust are likely to improve. Finally, training and resource support for the criminal justice system units specialising in livestock theft should be enhanced to ensure that prevention forums are not merely administrative but are capable of an effective operational response.

Policy, Legislation, and the Role of Stock Theft Prevention Forums in Research

This section examines the current legal and policy framework, drawing on research findings and media coverage to highlight challenges, gaps, and stakeholder perspectives in addressing livestock theft.

Effectiveness of Current Laws and Policies in Deterring Livestock Theft

Livestock theft remains a persistent and economically damaging crime in South Africa, particularly affecting rural communities and commercial farmers. Despite the existence of various legislative and policy instruments (Stock Theft Act 57 of 1959) aimed at curbing this issue, including the National Instruction 3 of 2020, the practical impact of these measures has been limited. This survey reveals several critical shortcomings in the current legal and policy framework.

One of the most striking findings from the study is the widespread lack of awareness and understanding of existing laws and policies among stakeholders, as evident in the qualitative data of the survey. Many livestock producers and members of the public are either unaware of the relevant legislation or do not fully grasp its implications. This knowledge gap significantly undermines the deterrent effect of the legal framework. Laws can only be effective if they are known, understood, and respected by those they are intended to protect and regulate. Without targeted education and outreach, even well-crafted policies risk becoming irrelevant in practice.

In addition to the issue of awareness, the survey highlights concern about the outdated nature of much of the existing legislation. The first reaction here is to consider the advocacy role of the LSTPF and/or commodity organisation in influencing policy and legislation(Clack, 2023). Furthermore, respondents noted that many laws governing livestock theft were enacted decades ago and do not adequately reflect the realities of

modern livestock production and theft tactics, such as the technology and preventative measures mentioned above in *Crime prevention measures*. Although there have been efforts since 2012 to modernise these laws, progress has been slow and fragmented. The lack of a cohesive and updated legal framework contributes to confusion and inefficiency in enforcement, further weakening the system's ability to deter criminal activity.

Interestingly, the study also uncovered a nostalgic preference among some producers for older, repealed regulations—particularly Section 5 of the Stock Theft Act, which prohibited the movement of animals after sunset and before sunrise. Many respondents expressed the belief that reinstating such provisions could serve as a stronger deterrent against theft. This sentiment suggests that some stakeholders perceive past measures, despite their restrictiveness, as more effective than current policies. It also points to a broader lack of confidence in the contemporary legal framework and its enforcement.

The study's findings suggest that the deterrent effect of current laws and policies is weakened by three interrelated factors: low levels of public and producer awareness, outdated or poorly implemented legal provisions, and limited confidence among producers in the efficacy of the current policy framework. Addressing these issues requires a multi-pronged approach. First, public education campaigns must be intensified to ensure that stakeholders are informed about their rights, responsibilities, and the mechanisms available to combat livestock theft. Second, a comprehensive review and modernisation of existing legislation is essential to align legal provisions with current challenges and technologies. Third, enforcement mechanisms must be strengthened, including better resourcing of stock theft units and improved coordination between the criminal justice system and agricultural communities.

In conclusion, while South Africa has made efforts to combat livestock theft through legislation and policy, the effectiveness of these measures remains constrained by systemic gaps in their implementation. Bridging these gaps through education, legislative reform, and enhanced enforcement could significantly improve the country's ability to deter livestock theft and protect the livelihoods of its rural and agricultural populations.

Adequacy of Penalties as a Deterrent Measure

Respondents expressed widespread dissatisfaction with the current legal framework, arguing that penalties are insufficient to prevent repeat offences. There is a strong perception that habitual offenders continue to operate with minimal fear of prosecution or punishment, prompting calls for harsher sentencing and stricter enforcement.

Several challenges undermine the effectiveness of existing penalties. Inefficiency within the criminal justice system and prosecutorial processes was frequently cited; cases are often poorly investigated or not followed through, leading to dismissals or lenient sentences. Corruption and a lack of accountability further exacerbate the problem, with some respondents suggesting that criminal justice system officials may be complicit or negligent, thereby weakening public trust in the justice system. Judicial leniency also contributes to the issue, as courts are perceived to grant bail too readily and impose minimal consequences, failing to deter offenders.

In response to these challenges, participants recommended a multi-pronged approach. Stricter enforcement of existing laws, alongside revisions to sentencing guidelines, would better reflect the severity of livestock theft. Improved training for police officers and prosecutors is essential to ensure that stock theft cases are handled efficiently and effectively. Additionally, community involvement in monitoring and reporting livestock theft, coupled with stronger coordination between

stakeholders, could enhance the overall effectiveness of deterrence strategies.

The sentiments of respondents are captured in statements such as, “Dat gewoonte misdadigers swaarder gestraf word” (*Repeat offenders should be punished more severely*), emphasising the need for harsher punishment for repeat offenders. Others described the current system as a “Totale mislukking geen veedief word gevang nie of toegesluit nie” (*Total failure—no livestock thieves are caught or jailed*), highlighting the perceived failure to apprehend and punish offenders. Calls to amend existing legislation, as reflected in the statement, “Die wet op Veediefstal aan te pas om beter vonnis te kry op sake” (*The law on livestock theft should be amended to ensure better sentencing*), underscore the urgent need for legal reforms to ensure more appropriate sentencing.

The prevailing view among respondents is that current penalties for livestock theft are inadequate as a deterrent measure. Addressing the identified challenges through stricter enforcement, legal reforms, enhancing the criminal justice system's capacity, and active community participation is essential to reducing livestock theft and restoring confidence in the justice system.

About sentencing, a prosecutor remarked: “

“We have books on sentencing in South Africa, the most frequently used being the book by Stephan Terblanche. Suppose a legal expert can write an entire book on sentencing. How can members of the public claim to understand the principles of sentencing, let alone have the

audacity to criticise them, when many do not even know the different court structures in South Africa?"

Identification and Addressing of Research and Operational Needs

Since the establishment of the Livestock Theft Prevention Forums (LTPFs) in 1995, academic and industry attention toward stock theft in South Africa has grown steadily, reflecting the crime's persistent impact on rural livelihoods, agricultural productivity, and community safety. An analysis of publications from 1995 onward reveals a diverse and evolving body of literature that spans multiple formats, disciplines, and publishing platforms.

The dataset includes 3,929 research articles, underscoring a strong empirical foundation in the study of stock theft. These articles are complemented by a modest number of editorials (9), news pieces (9), case reports (2), and briefs (2). While the dominance of research articles suggests a robust commitment to field-based inquiry and data-driven analysis, the limited presence of editorials and case reports points to a missed opportunity for reflective commentary, practitioner insights, and narrative-driven accounts of theft incidents and community responses.

The publications are drawn from a wide range of sources, with *Farmer's Weekly* (426 articles), *Servamus Magazine* (198), and *Stockfarm/Veeplaas* (151) leading the way in industry-focused reporting. (It is important to note that *Landbouweekblad* is excluded as it is not subscribed to the Sabinet Journal database.) Academic journals such as the *Annual Survey of South African Law* (109) and *Acta Criminologica* (106) offer legal and criminological perspectives, illustrating that stock theft is not only an agricultural issue but also a matter of criminal justice, law enforcement, and rural security.

Thematically, the research spans multiple academic collections, including Social Sciences and Humanities (1,489 articles), Science, Technology and Agriculture (1,120), and Law (833). This interdisciplinary

distribution reflects the multifaceted nature of stock theft, intersecting with sociology, criminology, agricultural science, and legal studies. The inclusion of 1,025 entries in the *African Journal Archive* also highlights the historical and regional depth of this discourse.

Publishing houses such as Caxton Magazines (426 articles), Juta and Company (272), and AOSIS (226) have played a central role in disseminating research on stock theft. Their combined efforts span both academic and practitioner-oriented platforms, ensuring that findings reach a broad audience—ranging from scholars and policymakers to farmers and criminal justice officials.

Language distribution reveals a strong preference for English (3,841 articles), followed by Afrikaans (604). While English ensures accessibility to a global academic audience, the continued presence of Afrikaans-language publications demonstrates strong engagement with local farming communities in regions where Afrikaans is predominantly spoken.

Accreditation data show that 1,186 articles are recognised by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), with additional indexing in SciELO SA (527), IBSS (348), and the Web of Science Core Collection. This indicates the scholarly credibility of the research and its relevance to both national policy development and academic discourse.

About research identification, it is noteworthy that the National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF) has, over the past two decades, initiated only one formal research project in collaboration with the Red Meat Research and Development Trust (RMRDT)—the study conducted by Doorewaard (2020), titled *“Livestock Theft: A Criminological Assessment and Sample-Specific Profile of the Perpetrators”* (University of South Africa). All other research and related publications have been initiated independently by individual academics and researchers, most prominently led by Willie Clack, Professor Witness Maluleke, and their collaborators. In the journalistic domain, consistent contributions from Kotie Geldenhuys,

particularly in *Servamus Magazine*, have further enriched the field with practitioner-focused insights.

In conclusion, the post-1995 publication landscape on stock theft in South Africa reflects a growing and increasingly interdisciplinary effort to understand and combat this rural crime. While the volume and diversity of research are impressive, future work could benefit from more integrative formats—such as review articles, thematic special editions, and practitioner-led case studies—that bridge the gap between academic insight and operational realities. Such developments would ensure that a dynamic and responsive knowledge base continues to support the Livestock Theft Prevention Forums and their broader strategic objectives.

Media attention to livestock theft

The study accepted for publication by the International Journal for Crime, Justice, and Social Democracy by Willie Clack titled *Livestock Theft in the Media: Quantitative Reporting Trends Across South African Provinces (April 2018 to March 2025)* examined media coverage of livestock theft in South Africa between 2018 and 2025, focusing on the frequency of the terms “stock theft”, “livestock theft”, and “veediefstal” in conjunction with mentions of the Red Meat Producers Organisation (RPO) and the National Livestock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF).

Media Trends and Case Data

Between 2018 and 2025, reported livestock theft cases fluctuated moderately, peaking at 28,627 cases in 2020/2021 before declining to 25,606 by 2024/2025. See *Figure 1: Number of livestock theft cases reported to the SAPS in South Africa..* In contrast, media attention increased sharply. English mentions of “stock theft” rose from 514 in 2018/2019 to 2,024 in 2024/2025, while Afrikaans mentions of “veediefstal” surged from 10 in 2023/2024 to 171 in 2024/2025. This divergence indicates a growing public

and institutional awareness of the issue, despite a slight reduction in reported cases.

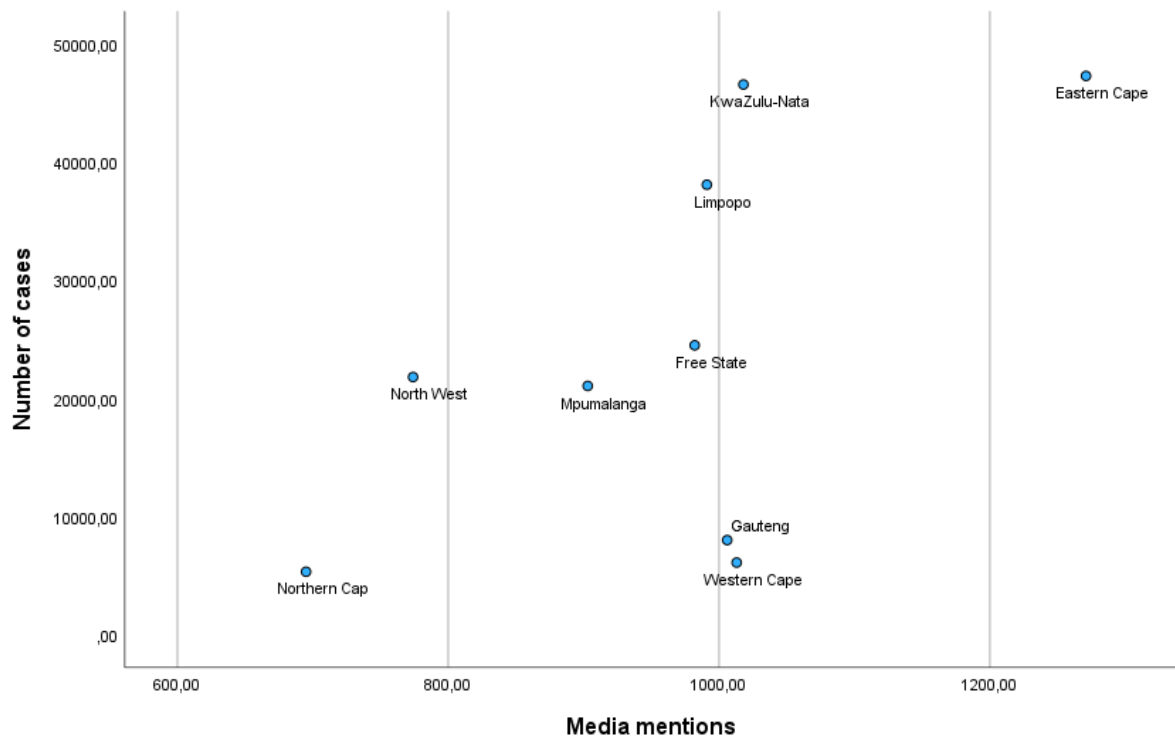
The introduction of statutory funding in 2022, providing R2 million annually to the NSTPF through Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS), likely contributed to enhanced outreach, media engagement, and public awareness (RPO, 2024). The simultaneous rise in media coverage and decline in theft cases may suggest increased awareness, community vigilance, and coordinated institutional responses. However, factors such as underreporting or targeted policing may also play a role.

Language and Regional Distribution

Across the nine provinces, the terms “stock theft” and “veediefstal” appeared 8,653 times (7,703 English; 950 Afrikaans). The Western Cape had the highest media-to-case ratio (0.166 mentions per case), followed by the Northern Cape (0.131) and Gauteng (0.126). Provinces with higher crime rates, such as KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo, showed lower ratios (~0.02–0.03), revealing unequal media attention. Nationally, the average ratio was 0.040 mentions per case, underscoring disparities in visibility across linguistic and geographic lines.

Correlation and Spatial Variation

Figure 6 Provincial Distribution of Media Coverage on Livestock Theft and the number of cases per province in South Africa (2018–2025)



The scatterplot analysis in Figure 6 revealed no significant linear relationship between livestock theft cases and media mentions ($r = 0.01$; $p = 0.978$). The Eastern Cape exhibited both high case numbers and significant media attention. In contrast, Gauteng and the Western Cape received disproportionate coverage relative to their actual crime levels—likely reflecting a concentrated media presence and urban readership. In contrast, rural provinces such as the Northern Cape, Mpumalanga, and North West were underrepresented, despite persistent theft levels.

Regional Perceptions and Policy Implications

The uneven distribution of coverage suggests a disconnect between the prevalence of livestock theft and its media portrayal, influencing public perception and policy prioritisation. Urban-based provinces benefit from amplified visibility, while rural areas—where theft is often more severe—receive limited exposure. This imbalance underscores how language, geography, and media infrastructure shape the social and political framing

of rural crime in South Africa. Greater attention to linguistic and regional representation in reporting may enhance policy responsiveness and community-level interventions.

Survey Results on Statutory Funding, Training, and Levy Impact

Table 12 presents survey responses on statutory funding, training, and the statutory levy, areas that are often contentious and where the distribution of funds is frequently challenged. Measuring perceptions of effectiveness, adequacy, and impact provides valuable insight into stakeholder confidence and highlights gaps in awareness and communication.

Table 12 Survey Responses on Statutory Funding, Training, and Levy Impact

Survey Area	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Neutral	Agree / Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Effectiveness of Statutory Funding	45.3% (18.8% + 26.5%)	17.8%	4.4% (0.8% + 3.6%)	32.5%
Adequacy of Training (NSTPF initiatives)	64.9% (31.4% + 33.5%)	9.8%	3.9%	21.4%
Impact of Statutory Levy (2022–2026)	51% (22.4% + 28.6%)	16.9%	3.9% (0.3% + 3.6%)	28.1%

The survey results, as shown in Table 12, received responses from 246 of 608 potential participants, revealing substantial uncertainty and limited knowledge regarding statutory funding, training initiatives, and the statutory levy. Regarding the effectiveness of statutory funding, nearly half of the respondents who expressed an opinion (45.3%) disagreed that funds are used effectively for training and support. In comparison, only a small fraction (4.4%) agreed. Notably, 32.5% of participants indicated that they did not know, highlighting widespread unfamiliarity with fund utilisation. Similarly, perceptions of training adequacy through NSTPF initiatives were overwhelmingly negative, with 64.9% of respondents disagreeing that current training sufficiently prepares the criminal justice system and the communities it serves, while only 3.9% expressed agreement. Concerns were also evident regarding the statutory levy (2022–2026), with 51% of

respondents doubting its contribution to livestock theft prevention, while only 3.9% perceived a positive impact, and 28.1% were unsure. Overall, the results indicate that disagreement consistently outweighs agreement across all three domains, reflecting a lack of confidence in current practices. The substantial proportion of “Don't know” responses underscores a broader lack of awareness, suggesting that improving communication, transparency, and monitoring could enhance public understanding, trust, and engagement with statutory funding, training, and levy initiatives.

Leadership of the LSTPF: Balancing Survey Preferences with the Rural Safety Strategy

Livestock theft in South Africa has evolved into a complex, multifaceted issue that extends far beyond its economic implications. Research demonstrates that while theft directly undermines agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods, it also has profound emotional, social, and psychological consequences. Farmers often experience grief, fear, and helplessness when their livestock—seen as family assets and symbols of heritage—are stolen (von Maltitz, 2024). Repeated incidents create chronic anxiety, eroding trust in both the criminal justice system and surrounding communities (Corrigan, 2019). Internationally, similar patterns have been observed; for instance, in the United Kingdom, agricultural crime contributes to farmer isolation, anxiety, and depression (Smith, 2020). These findings underscore the importance of addressing livestock theft not only as an economic problem but also as a social and emotional crisis that threatens rural cohesion and resilience.

In response to these challenges, South Africa has developed multi-tiered structures to combat rural crime, including Community Policing Forums (CPFs), Stock Theft Information Centres (STICs), Provincial Stock Theft Prevention Forums (PSTPFs), and the National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF). CPFs, established under the SAPS Act of 1995, aim to enhance collaboration between the police and communities (Masuku &

Motlalekgosi, 2021; Pelser, 2000). However, empirical research consistently highlights the limitations of CPFs in rural contexts. Low participation, inadequate funding, poor coordination, and uneven police engagement restrict their effectiveness, particularly in addressing specialised crimes such as livestock theft (Makondo et al., 2021; Malatji et al., 2023; Ngoveni et al., 2022). This is also evident in the study's findings.

In contrast, LSTPFs provide highly specialised, producer-driven structures focused on livestock theft. Established in 1995 and formalised through SAPS National Instruction 3 of 2020, the NSTPF coordinates national strategies, integrates intelligence, and guides policy, while STICs facilitate local intelligence sharing, community engagement, and operational support (Clack, 2024; SAPS, 2020). When well-resourced, these forums have demonstrated measurable reductions in livestock theft, as evidenced by Free State patrols reporting a nearly 16% decrease in incidents (IOL, 2025). However, the success of these forums depends heavily on SAPS leadership, private partnerships, such as Syntell (PTY) LTD (see Technology section), farmer participation, and adequate resourcing, highlighting the interdependence of the criminal justice system and community stakeholders.

Survey data on NSTPF leadership preferences illustrate the tension between practical and formal considerations. Across both English and Afrikaans respondents (total N = 341), organised agriculture was the preferred leader for 54.8% of respondents, while the SAPS received 15.5%, independent organisations 19.1%, and civic/community organisations 10.6%. These results reflect a strong correlation between respondents' affiliations and leadership preferences, with farmers prioritising the logistical and financial support that organised agriculture can provide. Qualitative feedback reinforces this view, noting that agricultural structures could fund meetings, mobilise resources, and enhance operational functionality.

Despite the survey preference for agriculture, the Rural Safety Strategy (RSS) clearly positions SAPS as the formal leader of rural crime prevention initiatives, including NSTPFs. RSS objectives emphasise the coordination of the criminal justice system, intelligence-driven operations, legislative review, and operational oversight. SAPS officials chair NRSPCs and NSTPFs, ensuring strategic alignment, legal authority, and access to prosecutorial mechanisms, all of which are essential for effective livestock theft prevention. Organised agriculture, while indispensable for funding, local knowledge, and community legitimacy, cannot fulfil these statutory responsibilities independently.

Integrating the literature review, the Stockfarm analysis (Clack, 2024d; Malatji et al., 2023; Minnaar, 2010), and the survey data, a balanced leadership model emerges. SAPS should lead the NSTPF, providing legal authority, intelligence integration, and national strategic coordination. As mentioned in the background of the study, no evidence has been established to support the current commodity leadership approach. Organised agriculture and other stakeholders should function as co-leaders or advisory partners, contributing operational resources, local expertise, and community mobilisation. This model aligns with Doucet and Lee's Civic Community Theory (Doucet & Lee, 2016). It also addresses the emotional and social dimensions of livestock theft by ensuring that farmers are actively engaged and supported in prevention initiatives.

In conclusion, while survey respondents naturally prioritise organised agriculture due to funding and local engagement considerations, the RSS and empirical literature demonstrate that SAPS leadership is essential for functional, legally grounded, and nationally coordinated livestock theft prevention. A cooperative model that integrates SAPS oversight with agricultural expertise, community participation, and research input offers the most effective and sustainable strategy for reducing livestock theft, enhancing rural safety, and promoting community resilience in South Africa.

DISCUSSION

Overview and Interpretation of Key Findings

This study presents a comprehensive examination of livestock theft in South Africa, exposing both meaningful progress and enduring systemic weaknesses. Although the number of reported theft incidents has declined over the past five years, the associated financial losses have risen sharply, particularly in the goat sector. This trend reflects a structural shift from frequent, small-scale thefts to fewer but more economically consequential incidents, often involving breeding animals or bulk consignments. The results indicate that the value per incident has escalated, driven by the expansion of informal livestock markets and the weak traceability mechanisms that characterise the goat industry.

Despite improved reporting, recovery rates have stagnated. Between 2007 and 2025, the annual value of recovered livestock has remained between R250 million and R300 million, while the total value of stolen livestock has increased from R300 million to more than R1 billion. This widening disparity highlights the decline in systemic efficiency in recovery and restitution. The data suggest that the state's ability to investigate, prosecute, and coordinate across stakeholders has not kept pace with the sophistication of livestock theft operations.

Forum Effectiveness and Community Engagement**

The Livestock Theft Prevention Forums (NSTPF, PSTPFs, and STICs) were established to promote coordination, data exchange, and shared responsibility among state, agricultural, and civic stakeholders. However, the findings reveal a deep disconnect between the forums' conceptual purpose and their operational reality. Participation remains limited and uneven: only 1.1% of respondents reported involvement at the national level and 8.7% at the STIC level, while 67.3% did not know about local meetings. More than half (51%) had no information about stakeholder participation, and over 70% had never attended a forum meeting.

Such results indicate that the forums are not functioning as participatory, community-driven mechanisms but as fragmented and poorly communicated structures. Their invisibility within rural communities undermines their legitimacy and limits their ability to prevent problems. The apparent absence of regular engagement and feedback channels reinforces the sense that these forums exist more as a formal administrative process than as operational instruments of rural safety.

Leadership Dynamics and Governance Challenges**

Leadership within the LSTPFs emerged as a point of persistent contention. While the Rural Safety Strategy (RSS) formally designates the South African Police Service (SAPS) as the leading body, most respondents (54.8%) favoured leadership by organised agriculture. This divergence highlights a tension between statutory authority and operational credibility. SAPS retains the legal and strategic mandate necessary for national coordination but often lacks the resources, agility, and trust embedded within rural communities. In contrast, agricultural organisations possess the logistical capacity and local legitimacy that SAPS sometimes lacks, but they cannot perform the functions of the criminal justice system independently.

The absence of formal documentation delineating the LSTPF's leadership responsibilities exacerbates this governance ambiguity and weakens accountability. The study thus supports a co-leadership model in which SAPS maintains formal leadership, while organised agriculture, civil society, and technology partners act as advisory and implementation co-leaders. This approach aligns with Civic Community Theory (Doucet & Lee, 2016), which emphasises shared responsibility and the co-production of safety through trust-based, locally embedded partnerships.

Recovery Rates as Indicators of Systemic Performance

The stagnation of recovery rates, despite increasing awareness and reporting, remains one of the most troubling findings. Financial recovery has

not improved even as theft values have quadrupled, implying that the criminal justice system and judicial systems have failed to adapt to changing theft patterns. Several factors contribute to this stagnation, including inadequate investigative capacity in rural areas, limited inter-provincial forum coordination, and poor prosecution outcomes, with low conviction rates and lenient sentencing that undermine deterrence.

Cattle theft accounts for over 70% of total financial losses; however, recovery values have declined to below R200 million in 2025. Goat theft, although smaller in scale, has increased significantly since 2020, suggesting a growing market demand and exploitative trading networks. These patterns reveal the urgent need for specialised livestock policing, better forensic tools, and the integration of community intelligence into official investigations.

Comparative Insights from Literature

The results align with previous studies that emphasise the central role of community guardianship and trust in rural crime prevention. Clack (2024), Maluleke et al. (2022), and Donnermeyer (2025) all emphasise the importance of sustained community participation and local intelligence in combating rural crime. However, the present study demonstrates that these principles have not been effectively implemented in practice. Limited participation, unclear leadership, and inadequate communication have rendered the forums largely symbolic rather than functional.

Moreover, the emotional impact of livestock theft, explored by von Maltitz (2024) and Corrigan (2019), remains profound. Farmers experience grief, anxiety, and a loss of control, magnified by the lack of institutional support and the slow pace of justice. The persistent disparity between theft and recovery thus reflects not only an economic crisis but also a social and psychological one, undermining rural resilience and trust in state institutions.

Policy and Legislative Implications

The study highlights several key policy imperatives. The Stock Theft Act of 1959 must be modernised to reflect contemporary trade dynamics, incorporating biometric identification, movement monitoring, and syndicate profiling (Maluleke, 2023). Clarifying NSTPF leadership through formal documentation is equally vital to ensure accountability and reduce duplication. Furthermore, SAPS and STICs require enhanced training, resource allocation, and operational support to strengthen investigative and prosecutorial outcomes.

Modern recovery strategies should include digital tracking systems, real-time auction surveillance, and cross-border cooperation. The perception among 64.9% of respondents that training is inadequate, and among 51% that the statutory levy has a limited tangible impact, underscores a crisis of confidence in the current framework. Restoring that confidence will require transparent governance, improved inter-agency coordination, and consistent community participation.

Technology, Media, and Public Awareness

Technological innovation has introduced valuable tools—such as CCTV surveillance, WhatsApp communication networks, and digital livestock identification—but their potential remains constrained by limited infrastructure, poor rural connectivity, and inconsistent integration with SAPS systems. In districts where these technologies are operational, perceptions of safety and response times have improved. However, their success depends on broader institutional uptake and coordination.

The role of the media in shaping public awareness and influencing policy prioritisation is equally significant. While national media coverage of livestock theft has increased, it remains inconsistent and regionally biased, with greater attention given to high-profile cases or commercial losses than to communal or smallholder incidents. This skewed visibility perpetuates a perception that livestock theft is primarily a commercial rather than a social

issue, thereby distorting policy responses. Strengthening partnerships between media outlets, agricultural unions, and rural communities could help correct this imbalance, foster informed public discourse, and encourage more equitable resource allocation.

Moreover, media participation in public education campaigns has the potential to enhance reporting rates and promote responsible livestock identification and movement practices. By framing livestock theft as a national security and socio-economic issue rather than a niche agricultural concern, the media can play a transformative role in reshaping both public understanding and policy engagement.

LIMITATIONS

A further dimension of concern relates to research participation. The study encountered uneven engagement from key institutional stakeholders, particularly within SAPS and communal farming sectors. Limited access to SAPS officials and the reluctance of some local officials to participate in surveys or interviews restricted the scope of analysis. This hesitancy reflects broader institutional fatigue and mistrust, which mirror the same communication breakdowns that affect the forums themselves.

To address these gaps, future research should prioritise inclusive methodologies that actively involve diverse farming constituencies, from commercial to emerging and communal sectors. Longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of forum effectiveness, recovery trends, and leadership dynamics would yield more precise insights into systemic performance over time. Qualitative interviews with SAPS officers, prosecutors, and forum leaders would provide essential context to the quantitative data, while comparative provincial studies could identify best practices adaptable to national policy.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrates that livestock theft in South Africa remains a multifaceted challenge that undermines rural economies, agricultural productivity, and social stability. While the Livestock Theft Prevention Forums (LSTPFs) provide an institutional foundation for cooperation, weaknesses in leadership, coordination, and funding continue to constrain their impact. The following recommendations propose realistic and actionable measures to improve prevention, investigation, and recovery outcomes.

Strengthen Leadership and Governance

Clear leadership and accountability are vital for effective coordination across the livestock theft prevention network. A formal governance framework should be established for the National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF) to define leadership roles, reporting lines, and decision-making responsibilities. The South African Police Service (SAPS) should remain the statutory lead, supported by organised agriculture and civic partners through formalised co-leadership arrangements. Memoranda of understanding between SAPS, the Department of Agriculture, and agricultural organisations will help reduce duplication and ensure alignment of objectives. Annual performance reviews and transparent reporting should be introduced to strengthen credibility and consistency.

Modernise the Legislative Framework

The Stock Theft Act of 1959 requires urgent modernisation to reflect the realities of contemporary livestock production and trade. Updated legislation should include biometric animal identification, digital movement permits, and mandatory livestock traceability systems. Stricter penalties for repeat and organised offenders must be introduced, alongside tighter control of informal livestock markets. Regional and cross-border cooperation should also be institutionalised, particularly in provinces bordering Lesotho, Eswatini, Botswana, and Namibia.

Enhance Investigative and Recovery Capacity

To improve recovery outcomes, SAPS must expand and strengthen specialised Stock Theft Investigation Units. These units should receive dedicated funding, ongoing training, and access to modern forensic and digital investigative tools and equipment. A national recovery monitoring system should be developed to track progress and identify operational gaps in real time. Intelligence-led policing should be standardised across provinces, supported by structured collaboration between SAPS investigators and local forums for intelligence sharing and rapid response.

Reinforce Community Participation and Forum Visibility

Livestock Theft Prevention Forums at local and provincial levels must be revitalised as inclusive, community-driven structures. Regularly scheduled meetings, transparent communication, and diverse representation—from commercial, emerging, and communal farmers—should be mandatory. Awareness campaigns led jointly by SAPS and agricultural bodies can enhance understanding of the forums' role and benefits. Consistent feedback through community radio, newsletters, and social media will help build local ownership and sustain engagement. These matters were all confirmed in an RPO membership survey conducted in 2020, which showed the general satisfaction of livestock producers (GWK, personal communication, 2020).

Invest in Technology and Data Integration

Modern technology must be recognised as a strategic pillar in the national approach to livestock theft prevention. Investment in rural connectivity, surveillance systems, and integrated data platforms is crucial for enhancing coordination and intelligence sharing. Technologies such as CCTV, GPS tracking, RFID tagging, and mobile reporting applications can significantly enhance detection and recovery.

Currently, the annual R2 million allocations provided through the statutory levy are primarily used to cover the operational expenses of commodity organisations. Serious consideration should be given to redirecting a portion of these funds toward the development and maintenance of technology-based prevention platforms, as well as to supporting provincial-level initiatives. A dedicated funding stream for digital systems and rural security infrastructure would yield far greater long-term returns by improving real-time information flow, standardising data collection, and enabling proactive response strategies.

A national livestock theft information platform, integrating SAPS, the Department of Agriculture, auction houses, and producer organisations, should be prioritised to centralise reporting and enhance situational awareness.

Strengthen Media and Public Awareness

The media plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding and sustaining political will. Partnerships between SAPS, agricultural associations, and both national and community media should ensure balanced, fact-based coverage of livestock theft across all sectors. Public education campaigns should promote awareness of identification regulations, reporting channels, and preventative measures. Enhanced rural media engagement, particularly via community radio and vernacular platforms, will broaden reach and representation. Media transparency also contributes to public accountability, reinforcing trust between rural stakeholders and law enforcement.

Improve Research Collaboration and Data Accessibility

Broader collaboration between research institutions, government departments, and industry partners is essential to support evidence-based policymaking. Establishing a national livestock theft research consortium would enable coordinated studies, data sharing, and policy

experimentation. Open-access data policies should be adopted to facilitate independent research and trend monitoring. Future studies must prioritise inclusion of communal and emerging farmers, ensuring that recommendations address diverse socio-economic realities across South Africa's rural landscape.

Strengthen Cross-Border and Inter-Provincial Coordination

Because livestock theft frequently transcends administrative and provincial boundaries, stronger inter-provincial and cross-border coordination is essential. Theft networks often operate fluidly across adjoining regions, exploiting jurisdictional gaps and inconsistent enforcement. To address this, formal mechanisms for collaboration between provinces should be revitalised and expanded.

A particularly effective model previously existed between the Free State, North West, Gauteng, and Mpumalanga provinces, with the Free State and Gauteng taking the lead in facilitating intelligence sharing and joint operational planning. This forum provided a practical example of how structured inter-provincial cooperation can enhance the detection, tracking, and recovery of stolen livestock. It demonstrated that consistent communication, shared intelligence databases, and regular joint meetings between provincial stock theft units can significantly enhance responsiveness and investigative success.

Reviving and institutionalising this collaborative framework—supported by SAPS, the Department of Agriculture, and provincial law enforcement—would strengthen operational cohesion and ensure that cases involving multiple jurisdictions are managed seamlessly. The re-establishment of such inter-provincial forums could also provide a model for developing cross-border partnerships with neighbouring countries such as Lesotho, Eswatini, Botswana, and Namibia, where livestock movement and theft syndicates are prevalent. These partnerships should include

harmonised livestock identification systems, coordinated border patrols, and shared databases for tracking recovered or suspicious livestock.

By learning from the success of the former Free State–North West–Gauteng–Mpumalanga collaboration, South Africa can build a more coherent and intelligence-driven framework for combating livestock theft across regions and borders, thereby closing gaps that organised criminal groups continue to exploit (Damons, 2017).

Establish Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability Mechanisms

Monitoring and evaluation systems are necessary to sustain progress and accountability. A national performance scorecard should track key indicators such as recovery rates, conviction outcomes, and forum participation. SAPS and the NSTPF should publish annual progress reports, supported by independent audits of operational data. These mechanisms will ensure transparency, guide resource allocation, and enable continuous refinement of strategies.

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ANNEXURE A

Policing livestock theft: community engagement

The study examines how proactive policing and community partnerships affect livestock theft recovery and rural safety. Findings will inform strategies to build trust and enhance crime prevention in farming communities.

The following is an abbreviated version of the information. If you need more information, please contact Willie Clack at wclack@unisa.ac.za.

You are invited to take part in a research study led by Willie Clack, senior lecturer at the University of South Africa, with support from the Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS). If you are 18 or older and actively involved in farming in South Africa, your input is highly valued. As an active farmer, your experience and insights are vital to shaping effective rural policing and national food security strategies. Participation involves completing a brief, anonymous online survey that takes about 10 minutes. Only one participant per farming household is requested. You are encouraged to share the survey with other farmers in your community. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may skip any question, but once your anonymous response is submitted, it cannot be withdrawn. No personal or identifying information will be collected. Your responses will remain anonymous and securely stored, in line with UNISA's data protection policies. Data collected will be used solely for research purposes and may help inform public policy and safety initiatives. Any future use of the data will require additional ethical clearance. There are no direct benefits or financial incentives, but your input could contribute to improving policing, safety, and trust in rural areas. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, you may exit the survey immediately. This study is supported by the South African Police Service (SAPS), Organised Agriculture and RMIS, the South African Police Service Research Directorate and approved by UNISA's College of Law Ethics Committee.

* Required

1. If you agree to participate in this research, please click 'Yes' to provide your consent; if you click 'No,' you will be automatically excluded from the study *

☐ Yes ☐ No

Demographic & Organisational Information

2. In which province/s is your farm/s located? *

☐ Eastern Cape ☐
Free State ☐ Gauteng
☐ KwaZulu-Natal ☐
Limpopo
☐ Mpumalanga ☐
Northern Cape ☐ North
West
Western Cape

☐

3. What is the name of your local police station? *

4. Your major role in your community *

- ☐ Livestock producer ☐ SAPS member
- ☐ Prosecutor
- ☐ Auctioneer/agent
- ☐ Abattoir owner/employee
- ☐ I am involved in crime prevention in another role,
Private security on behalf of farming communities
Technology development in crime prevention

5. If your answer to question 4 is "I am involved in crime prevention in another role" provide a brief of your involvement

6. What is your age group *

- ☐ 20 to 25
- ☐ 26 to 30
- ☐ 31 to 35
- ☐ 36 to 40
- ☐ 41 to 45
- ☐ 46 to 50
- ☐ 51 to 55
- ☐ 55 to 60
- ☒ 61 and over

7. Are you a member of any of the following organisations (alphabetical order)? More than one is appropriate (There is not enough space to mention all provincial affiliations, you may include that under question 8, but indicate the National organisation here) *

- ☐ AgriSA ☐
AFASA
☐ Afriforum ☐
BFASA ☐ NAFU
☐ NAFLA SA (NERPO) ☐
RPO
☐ Red Meat Action Group (RAG) ☐
SAFDA
☐ SAAI
- ☐ Solidarity
- ☐ TAU-SA (TLU-SA)
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other

8. If other please specify only if you choose other in question 7

9. Indicate your landownership or involvement in agriculture *

- ☐ Own land ☐
Land leased
☐ Communal land
- ☐ I am not a farmer but part of the red meat value chain ☐
I am employed in the criminal justice system

10. Where you or any person on your farm vever the victim of a violent crime *

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

11. Did you report the matter to the police (SAPS) *

☐ Yes ☐ No

12. Have you or someone on your farm, ever been a victim of livestock theft on the farm? *

☐ Yes ☐ No

13. If you answered 'yes', was the matter reported to the police? *

☐ Yes ☐ No

14. Whether if you reported to the Police or not, and for whatever reason did you reported the matter to *

- ☐ Private security company ☐
Farm Watch
☐ Neighbours

☐ Crime report centres

RPO and ☒ National Stock Theft Prevention Forum

Technology and social media in rural crime prevention

15. Which of the following technologies are used in your area

- ☐ CCTV cameras with license plate registration ☐
CCTV camera without license plate registration ☐
None of the above

16. If CCTV cameras are installed, please select an option below regarding whether the:

- ☐ System is connected to a Professional Security Company ☐
System is connected to a local security company
☐ The system is connected to the Farmers Union

☐ System is connected to one or two administrators ☐ I do not know

17. Since the CCTV camera system is installed, please indicate your perception of crime in your farming area:

Reduced significantly

Reduced a bit
changes

No

Slight increase

Significant

observed

increase

Your opinion on contact crimes (murder, assault etc.)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Your opinion on economic crimes (theft, burglary, livestock theft)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

18. Which of the following is used in crime prevention by yourself in the farming community?

- ☐ WhatsApp group ☐ Telegram
- ☐ Facebook group ☐ Market radios
- ☐ Other not mentioned

19. If your answer to the question above is 'other not mentioned', please provide the social media or technology used: awareness and involvement

20. Are you involved in livestock theft prevention? *

- ☐ Not involved
- ☐ Organised agriculture
- ☐ Civic community organisations
- ☐ Local Stock Theft and Endangered Species Information Centre (STIC) ☐ Provincial Stock Theft Prevention Forum (PSTPF)
- ☐ National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF)

21. Are you aware of any of the following structures: National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF), Provincial Stock Theft Prevention Forum (PSTPF), or a Stock Theft Information Center (STIC).

- ☐ Yes ☐ No
- ☐

22. Are you actively involved in any of these forums or centres?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

23. How often do you attend or participate in their meetings or activities?

- ☐ Weekly ☐
- ☐ Monthly ☐
- ☐ Seasonal ☐ Yearly
- ☐ Never
- ☐ I have no information

Structure Functionality and Communication

24. In your experience, do the Livestock Theft Prevention Forums or Information Centres (STICS) in your area meet regularly and consistently?

- ☐ Always ☐
- ☐ Often ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never
- ☐ I do not have any information

25. Are all relevant role players (such as farmers, police officers, prosecutors, and agricultural organisations) actively involved and contributing in meetings?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes ☐
- ☐ Seldom

26. Do you feel your concerns or suggestions are taken seriously and acted upon in these structures?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

27. How would you rate the level of communication between the livestock theft prevention structures and the South African Police Service?

- ☐ Excellent ☐
Good ☐ Fair
☐ Poor

I do not know ☒

Impact and Effectiveness

28. Since your involvement in a livestock theft prevention structure, has the number of livestock theft incidents in your area changed?

- ☐ Decreased significantly ☐
Decreased slightly
☐ Remained the same ☐
Increased
☐ Unaware

29. Are cases of livestock theft in your area properly investigated by the police and followed through to prosecution?

- ☐ Always ☐
Often ☐ Rarely
☐ Never ☐
Unaware

30. How satisfied are you with the overall impact of these livestock theft prevention structures in your area?

- ☐ Very satisfied
☐ Somewhat satisfied
☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied ☐
Somewhat dissatisfied
☐ Very dissatisfied,
Unaware of any actions

Governance & Structure

31. In your opinion, do the roles and responsibilities of different safety structures (such as the National Rural Safety Priority Committee, the Livestock Theft Prevention Forum, and the Livestock Theft Information Centre) overlap or cause confusion?

*

- ☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ I am not sure

32. What would you suggest to improve the effectiveness and coordination of livestock theft prevention efforts in your area?

*

33. Answer the following statements only if you do have knowledge on the matter

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unaware
The current structure of Prevention Forums (NSTPF, PSTPFs and STICs) allows for effective collaboration between stakeholders	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is clarity regarding who is responsible for leading your STIC or other structure	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The appointment of Prevention Forums leadership roles is transparent and fair.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Prevention Forums leadership demonstrates genuine commitment to the reduction of livestock theft	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is a clear distinction of responsibilities between the Crime prevention forums, NSTPF, PSTPFs, and STICs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Objectives and Operational Performance

34. Please indicate your choice below

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unaware
The NSTPF is meeting its goal of evaluating and improving policies and procedures related to livestock theft.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The NSTPF has successfully facilitated changes in legislation or enforcement practices related to livestock theft.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is evidence that the NSTPF has positively impacted the reduction of livestock theft in your area.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The NSTPF ensures compliance with legislation among all stakeholders in the red meat value chain.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The NSTPF promotes accountability among role players in the livestock industry.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please provide examples of any successful initiatives implemented by the Prevention forums or its sub forums in your area

Functioning of Provincial and Local (STIC) Forums

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	I do not know	Agree	Strongly agree	Unaware
Your Provincial Stock Theft Prevention Forum (PSTPF) meets regularly and functions effectively.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is collaboration between organised agriculture groups at the provincial level.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The PSTPF is inclusive of all key stakeholders, including communal and commercial farmers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Stock Theft Information Centres (STICs) provide useful information and help reduce livestock theft.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
STIC meetings are well-attended and represent the concerns of local livestock owners.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Private Security Organisations are involved at provincial level	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please describe any challenges currently faced by your local STIC or PSTPF

Stakeholder Representation and Inclusiveness

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Do not know	Agree	Strongly agree	Unaware
Stakeholders from both commercial and communal sectors are equitably represented in the Prevention Forums.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Organised agriculture structures (e.g. AgriSA, NALFA SA, RPO, NAFU, AFASA, TAU-SA) work collaboratively within the Prevention Forums.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Political or organisational differences affect the effectiveness of forum operations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Forum members are appointed/ elected based on relevant expertise and a passion for reducing stock theft.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

In your opinion, which organisation(s) should lead the NSTPF?

- ☐ South African Police Service
 ☐ Organised agriculture
☐ Civic community organisations/ Independent persons/organisations
☐

Capacity Building and Resource Allocation

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No not know	Agree	Strongly agree	Unaware
The statutory funding received is effectively used to train and support stakeholders	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is adequate training provided to law enforcement and community members through NSTPF initiatives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The new statutory levy (2022-2026) contributes positively to livestock theft prevention.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What types of training or resources would help your community better prevent stock theft?

35. Perceived Impact and Recommendations

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Overall, the Prevention Forums contributes to the national strategy against livestock theft.	☐	☐	☐	☐

36. Do you feel livestock theft is currently under control in your region? *

☐ Yes
 ☐ No
☐ Partially
 ☐ Not sure

What, in your opinion, are the main reasons for the success or failure of the Prevention Forums? *

Please suggest ways in which the Prevention Forums and related structures can be improved.