

HEY NEIGHBOR

By Frank J. Buchman

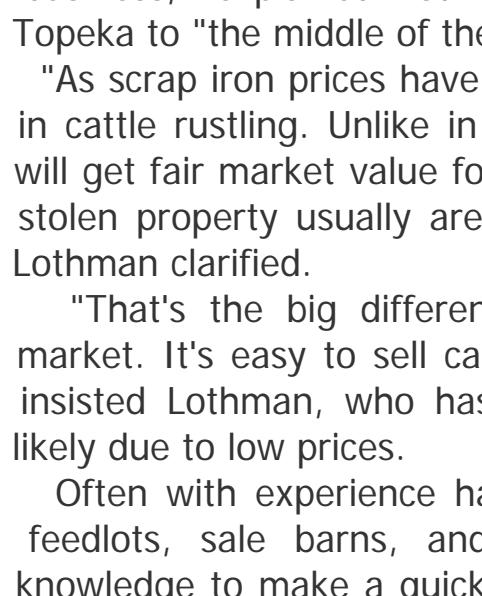
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Rustling Cattle Profitable Business During High Markets In Beef Industry

"Lazy thieves can make easy money stealing high priced cattle."

The lawman bluntly warned the room filled with cattlemen that caution should be taken to prevent cattle rustling.

"Record prices are driving thefts of cattle," said Kendal Lothman at the Beef Producers Information Seminar in Emporia.



Kelly Lenz, 580 WIBW farm director, is with Kendal Lothman, special agent for the livestock and brand investigation unit of the Kansas Attorney General's Office, before his discussion about cattle rustling during the Beef Producers Information Seminar at Emporia.

Speaking to the breakfast session hosted by 580 WIBW and moderated by longtime farm editor Kelly Lenz, Lothman is a special agent for the livestock and brand investigation unit of the Kansas Attorney General's Office.

With broad experience in law enforcement, Lothman said Kansas has more than 5.7 million cattle, and 45 percent are in the western one-third of the state.

This is likely due to large confinements such as feedlots and dairy.

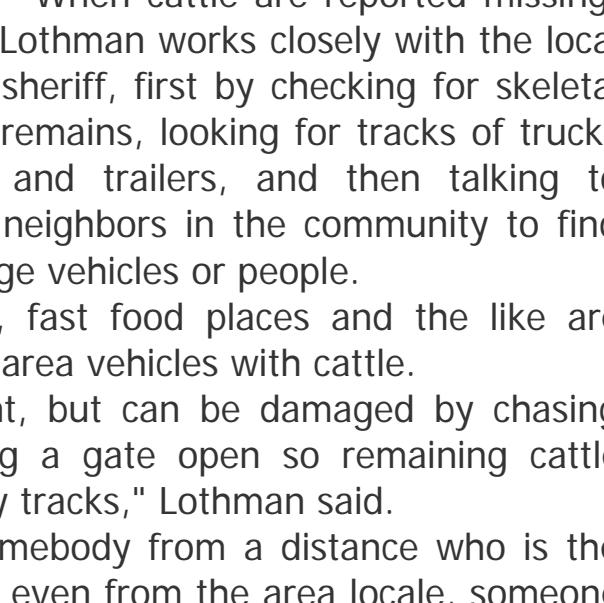
"Cattle are easy ready targets for those in the bad guy business," explained Lothman, whose office has moved from Topeka to "the middle of the state," at Great Bend.

"As scrap iron prices have declined, there has been an increase in cattle rustling. Unlike in most other property crimes, thieves will get fair market value for the cattle they steal. Tools or other stolen property usually are subject to depreciation when sold," Lothman clarified.

"That's the big difference; cattle have a set value, ready market. It's easy to sell cattle, compared to selling scrap iron," insisted Lothman, who has not had any horse stealing cases, likely due to low prices.

Often with experience handling and dealing with livestock in feedlots, sale barns, and dairies, cattle rustlers "have the knowledge to make a quick dollar with no work," often to "fund their habit," whatever it might be.

"These guys do their homework. They may not be the smartest cookies, but they check out cattle in corrals, pens, pastures, know when there isn't anybody around, even use the corrals there, maybe just set up in a fence corner and run the cattle into their trailer. With no expenses, just a few head is a lot of money," Lothman verified.



Cattle weighing four to six hundred pounds are most often stolen in groups of ten head or less. "That's a big loss, a big deal to the one who owns the cattle," he emphasized.

Cows and baby calves are also stolen; generally one or two head at a time.

Finding the cattle after they've been stolen is Lothman's job, and it's a difficult task, with low success, in reality.

"However, cattlemen need to help themselves, just use more common sense, and that will help me," the speaker said.

"Check your cattle on a regular basis. Count them every time you go to check water or salt, and keep records of date and time. That should be at least every week or preferably more often," he advised.

"If there is not the exact count, the cattle are missing, strayed or stolen. Attempt should be made to locate the cattle personally, contact neighbors and then report the missing cattle to the county sheriff," Lothman demanded.

While locking gates requires time, and is not a complete deterrent to cattle thievery, it makes the process is more difficult.

"Pay attention to strange people and vehicles in an area. Talk to your neighbors, call somebody if you see something out of the ordinary," Lothman suggested.

"The Livestock and Brand Investigation Unit of the Attorney General's Office responds to requests from local law enforcement agencies for help with cattle theft investigations. Our office currently has 19 open investigations. Since the Unit was started in November, 2014, there have been 28 cases opened by the Attorney General's office," said Jennifer Rapp, public information officer for the Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt.

Padre Says:

"The future is always beginning now."

Frank J. Buchman

Marketing Consultant

Direct: 785-228-7259 Cell: 785-499-3063

E-mail: frank.buchman@wibwradio.com

Website: www.frankjbuchman.com

PO Box 1818

1210 SW Executive Drive, Topeka, Kansas 66615

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