

LIVESTOCK THEFT IN 21ST CENTURY ARIZONA

BY: K.B. 'ZEKE' AUSTIN, SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS SUPERVISOR

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

As a Livestock Theft Investigator for the Arizona Department of Agriculture, I was asked to present an article to the Arizona Cattle Growers' and anyone else who might read the *Cattlelog* regarding theft today in Arizona. Also, to give some insight on what to do to help prevent theft and damage to your property.

I have been with the Department for thirty-one and half years of which twenty-four and a half were spent investigating livestock thefts and killings. I can tell you straight up that the success rate is not that great, but any conviction in any community tends to put the skids on the problem at least for awhile.

A very important fact, that I feel needs to be told here and now, is that this problem is not just ours (Arizona) this problem extends throughout the world. Those of you that have some computer savvy can "Google" livestock theft and you will see articles and statistics from around the world. As an example: New South Wales, you know the land down under, lose 1.5 million dollars to livestock theft annually. Furthermore, several African states, which the people there rely on livestock as their sole source of income, much like our ranchers, have a fast growing, out of control problem with livestock theft. Most of these African 'ranchers' do not

have the assets to go to a bank and get a loan. They live in grass huts, do not own any land and travel mostly on foot.

I do not want to detract too far from the real purpose of this article, **PREVENTION** and **PREVENTATIVE** measures you can take to help curb theft and damage to your cattle and property.

By the way, these points I am going to make are universal; those articles from New South Wales, Kenya and South Africa all say the same thing:

IDENTIFICATION is the number one deterrent for theft. A permanent mark is, and always has been the number one deterrent. I still own ink pens that the Arizona Livestock Board use to give out that say one thing, "a BRAND is the only return address for livestock." This still holds true and we continue to return a large number of strays because they are **BRANDED**.



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I have been told by many old timers about cowboy school and the basics set forth there:

- Cowboy 101 - BRAND YOUR CATTLE.
- Cowboy 102 - KEEP YOUR FENCES IN GOOD REPAIR.
- Cowboy 103 - KEEP YOUR GATES IN GOOD REPAIR.
- Cowboy 104 - KEEP YOUR CATTLE GUARDS CLEAN.

We all do these things and they are routine on any ranch. Now we have to deal with the people problem. The fact that we used to live in the wide open spaces has pretty much



Stolen Arizona cattle with altered brands found in a Texas feedlot.



gone by the way side and we now have major roads going right through the middle of our range. There is no way to stop a thief if he really wants to steal, and no way to stop a vandal if he really wants to destroy something.

I recently went to a meeting in Kearney where ranchers, the Sheriff's Office, representatives from our Department and folks from SACPA (Southern Arizona Cattle Protective Association) met. I believe SACPA had a meeting prior to our arrival and I believe the concern is that theft is on the rise and what is everyone doing about it.

One topic of discussion was **SIGNAGE**. SACPA

has signs, I did not see one but I am in total agreement that **SIGNAGE** does deter the so called criminal element, not always - but quite often. The result of SIGNAGE is always the same, they get shot to pieces and torn down eventually, but while they are up they do help.

I do not know what happened, but I can remember the day when every County Cattle Growers Association made signs and distributed them among their members. I would strongly recommend that the practice of signage return.

Now on a modern note, with the **SIGNAGE** comes another item that needs discussion at this time -**CAMERAS**. I could write a whole story just on cameras. I have used them covertly many times and have assisted several sheriffs' offices and the Game and Fish with catching people violating the law. I did not get my cow thieves, but we caught a lot of people leaving gates open. With the license plate numbers on the camera chip or video tape the people had no recourse but to plead guilty.

I have had cameras stolen. So, if I was going to make a recommendation I would buy the infrared flash type and even go as far as to purchase the wireless, invisible infrared type. This way you might lose the camera but the wireless receiver will still have the photos or video.

Using these cameras in conjunction with signage are some of the best modern deterrents.



Can you read this brand?

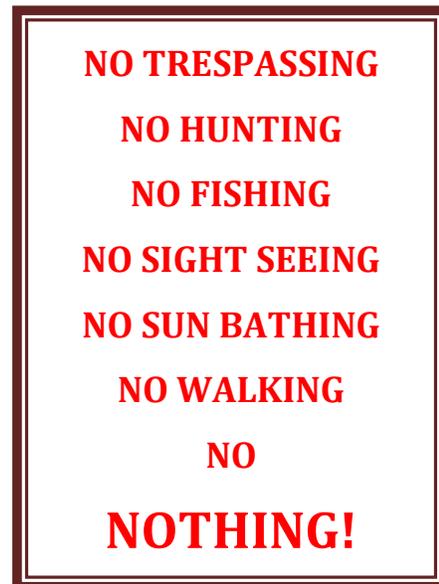
In conclusion, there is no greater deterrent than visibility and publicity. Be visible on your ranch as much as possible, get to know your local law enforcement folks. Make a point of stopping and talking with them on a one-on-one basis. Most law enforcement does not know much about livestock and are usually somewhat excited to hear your story. The Arizona Game and Fish will provide you with certain signs also. Get to know your wildlife manager and he will be glad to work with you.

Change your routine; do not do the same thing day after day. Do not travel the same way from your ranch, unless you only have one way out.

Focus on getting license numbers, no matter what the situation; law enforcement cannot help much without good information. Get the license number first then focus on description.

Lastly, if you have state or federal lease land work with these land managers to get gates locks, pastures locked and perhaps some more eyes out on your place.

And lastly, although the Department is very low on man power, get to know your livestock officer/Inspector and do not hesitate to call them. Most of us work very closely with the local law enforcement folks and can help them help you.



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modernlivestock merchandising



Choosing the Right Digital Camera for your Ranch

by Rachel Cutrer

Article made possible by a grant from the Arizona Cattle Industry Foundation

Though hiring professional photographers has its advantages, for many producers may not be a viable option, due to time or budget constraints. Today's modern livestock merchandisers are often forced to shoot their own photos, or hire professionals to take key animal pictures, for advertising or sale catalogs, while performing all other photography tasks themselves. When opting to take your own photos, selecting the right digital camera is key to achieving a high quality end-product.

Before heading to the store to make a purchase, prospective photographers should consider the ways in which they plan on using the camera, to help determine which one will best suit their needs. Livestock photos can be used in printed advertising, sale catalogs, on a web site or Facebook, emailed to possible clients, and even sent as messages through mobile phone devices. Since all of these mediums use different resolutions, it is best to think about how you plan on using your photos before making a purchase.

Resolution is the key factor that determines whether or not a photo can be used across different advertising platforms. Print advertising, such as magazine ads and sale catalogs, requires photos to be a minimum resolution of 300 dpi and usually in a JPG or a TIFF format. The greater the dpi, the more clear and sharp the picture will be. Conversely, a photo taken with a cell phone camera is much lower resolution, and could never be used effectively in a print ad. While an image can always be reduced in size and resolution, it is not possible to increase either.

There are two types of cameras most merchandisers opt for purchasing: a high-end SLR (single lens reflex) digital camera, such as a Canon EOS; or a point-and-shoot compact digital camera, such as the Nikon CoolPix. If your budget allows, purchasing both types of cameras can be advantageous. The larger, more expensive camera can be used for print photography and the smaller more convenient camera for web site photos.

Modern livestock merchandisers intending to create all of their own photos, for use in both print and web marketing, can achieve almost professional quality by purchasing a camera such as the Nikon D-SLR or Canon EOS. Cameras in these two series can offer up to 18.0 megapixel quality and can easily capture images suitable for any type of catalog or print ad, up to 8x10 inches at 300 dpi. While these cameras range from \$1000 to \$5000, they often last for long periods of time and make for a worthwhile investment. They can be purchased easily at retail stores, such as Best Buy, or at local camera shops. If you are not familiar with how to use this type of camera, consider purchasing from a local camera store, which may offer technical support or give you a basic overview of the camera.

For producers planning to use their camera for the sole purpose of taking casual pictures for emailing potential clients, or posting to their web site, a more affordable camera, like the Canon PowerShot series, will work just fine. Cameras of this caliber are typically priced between \$200 and \$500. A good point-and-shoot camera is also capable of taking pictures intended for print advertising or sale catalogs, generally speaking however, the pictures cannot be printed at a size larger than 3x5 or 4x6 inches. The compact size of this camera is an added benefit, as it often fits easily in a shirt pocket or truck console, allowing for easy access.

It is recommended to purchase the highest quality camera you can afford, since a good camera is often an investment that lasts several years, with the proper care and maintenance. In many cases, older cameras (both film and digital) can be easily upgraded by purchasing additional lenses with greater capabilities or specialty features. Such lenses can increase the focal length capability of existing cameras, allowing a modern livestock merchandiser to shoot quality photos from greater distances. The cost of this upgrade can range from \$100 to \$1500, depending on the lens capability. Telephoto lenses can even further increase the detail and capability of a camera. Ranging in cost anywhere from \$100 to \$2500, these lenses are typically used at sporting events, or to create the blurred background effects commonly seen in professional photography. Fortunately for us, such professional premium upgrades are not required for casual livestock photos, as it is recommended to avoid using wide-angle lenses when photographing livestock.

A good flash is also helpful in creating a more professional picture, and aids in highlighting an animal's detail and natural appearance. Upgraded flashes can greatly assist in delivering great exposure and balance, without the necessity of post editing.

Just as a modern livestock producer would carefully consider the pros and cons of purchasing a new herd sire, a new livestock trailer, or a new scale, adding a new camera to your marketing toolbox should be carefully evaluated. Set your budget and determine your goals for photo usage, then speak with a retail professional or fellow livestock photography enthusiast to help you find the best possible camera for your operation. ©2011



Rachel Cutrer, M.S., is president of Ranch House Designs, Inc., a leading national graphic design and communications firm.