



## Using Evidence of Empirical Research to Understand the Nature and Extent of Stock Theft: Lessons from Limpopo Province of South Africa

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### **Abstract**

Using evidence of empirical research to understand the nature and extent of stock theft in the Limpopo Province of South Africa was the objective of this study. This qualitative study collected data through semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), by purposively selecting prominent South African Police Service (SAPS) members, this was aided by the adoption of non-empirical research design: Systematic review, closely looking at recent reputable reports across globe, while using South Africa as a case study, restricted to 2000-2021 [Not in sequence]. The inductive Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was applied for data analysis. This study established that the current relationship between the local livestock farmers and community members nor relevant stakeholders [Anti-Stock theft structures] is in current disarray state, further positively contributing to the increase of this crime, moreover, adequate deterrent (Combative, Preventative and Investigative) strategies seem to be ineffective. The relevant parties unclearly understand the nature and extent of stock theft in the study locations. It was concluded and recommended that the existing stock theft combating, prevention and investigation strategies be integrated with empirical research studies to enhance current practices. The SAPS Stock Theft Units (STUs) in the Limpopo Province should be strengthened by emphasizing closer collaboration, interaction and information exchange amongst these stakeholders and to promote greater awareness, pertaining the nature and extent of this crime across the province, as understanding stock theft phenomenon and prevalence, is critical to its prevention.

**Keywords:** *Empirical Research; Extent; Limpopo Province; Nature; Understand; Using Evidence [of]; South Africa; Stock Theft*

### **Introduction**

In South Africa, stock theft is regarded as the National crisis; this is also evident in its bordering countries, such as Namibia, Lesotho, and Botswana. According to Dzimba and Matooane (2005), this crisis has incited great chaos in the Southern Africa sphere. This crime was considered a crisis in 1999,

further prompting the Southern African Development Community (SADC) responsible delegates to arrange an urgent meeting of Ministers to decide that this region must take immediate security-measures concerning the policing of stock theft by developing decent information systems that can identify and track down the livestock (Dambe & Fombad, 2020).

In the past, the challenge of stock theft has turned out to be a relentless exercise affecting food security and making a living for the livestock owners difficult in South Africa (Bunei & Kariaga, 2016:2). In the official crime figures recorded and released by the local SAPS, this crime is grouped together with the property-related crimes and it is highly prioritised by them (SAPS, 2015:55). Manganyi, Maluleke and Shandu (2018:1) state that the incidence of stock theft has been growing at an alarming rate that and it have adverse effects on livestock owners' survival and sustainability. Geldenhuys (2009) posits that the livestock owners do not only experience enormous monetary losses; but they are also confronted by the ruthlessness and brutality of stock criminals by wounding, or injuring, and slaughtering their livestock. Additionally, it is not just the farming society that that is affected by this crime; it also affects the South African economy negatively.

Moreover, stock theft has been among the most eminent problems encountered by the livestock owners in South Africa. This problem is touted to be intensifying, terrifying and pose a serious threat to the livestock farmers; it is also stated that its affects all the sectors of farming community, from the commercial farmer, to the stud breeder, to emerging farmers, and those who only own few herds of livestock (Geldenhuys, 2009). The occurrence of this crime is coupled with problems, such as stock health and preying of livestock [Stock theft], this practice hinder livestock owners and farming society from its ability to create employment and reducing poverty across South Africa. According to Maluleke (2014), this problem encroaches the emerging farmers who may have a small number of herds.

Furthermore, this problem is specified as more frequent than other kinds of property-related crimes in South Africa. The provinces mostly affected by stock theft that are KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Limpopo, and Free State, amongst others. The incidence of stock theft has been reported in huge figures and this could devastate the farming community if it is not tackled urgently (Manganyi, Maluleke & Shandu, 2018).

Wilk, Andersson, and Warburton (2013:276) highlight that stock theft affects both industrial farmers [Commercially] and non-industrial farmers (The emerging and rural livestock farmers), regardless whether they own livestock to obtain revenue or to support their families. According to Doorewaard (2016:31), the effects of stock theft also increase concerns of mistrusts and suspicions, which cause the farmers not to report stock theft and resort to vigilantism or taking the law into their own hands. This crime is recognised by farming communities as the main cause of poverty and a reason for the livestock farmers to have small and restricted herd size (Dzimba & Matooane, 2005). Importantly, the Donkeys, Mules and Horses are alternative means of transportation in most rural parts of the country, these types of animals are also used for cultivating on the farms; those that do not own them because of stock theft cannot plough on their land, owing to stock theft prevalence, these animals are no longer accessible and few individuals who owns these animals are afraid to provide them out to those who need them nor to own them, Dzimba and Matooane (2005).

Statistically, the January 2021 to March 2021 SAPS stock theft statistics, as release during the Fourth quarter period in South Africa, indicated there 6 089 cases of stock theft crime which shows the decline in 715 cases as compared to the financial year first quarter statistic of 2020/21, which had 6 853 stock theft counts. This indicate that there was 8% Nationwide decline in stock theft comparing the previous year 2019/2020. The 2019/20 SAPS stock theft statistics, reflects the first quarter numbers, focusing on the '01 January 2020 to 31 March 2020,' it was showcased that January 2021; recorded 2 420 cases, while, February 2021, reported 2 241 cases, with March 2021; recording 2 146 cases. The monthly

distribution of 2020/21 SAPS stock theft statistics for 01 January 2021 to 31 March 2021 – The first quarter were portrayed as follows: January 2021 (1 993), February 2021 (1 950), and March 2021 (2 192). Therefore, the stock theft statistics comparison for 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial year monthly case difference shows that there was 427 decline of stock theft cases in January 2021, a further decline of 291 cases in February 2021, and an increase of 46 cases in March 2021 (SAPS, 2021).

According to SAPS (2021:84), the 2021/22 SAPS stock theft statistics – The first quarter statistics indicated about 6 757 stock theft cases, which shows the decline in 588 cases as compared to the financial year first quarter statistic of 2020/21 financial year, which had 7 345 cases. Approximately 8% decline in stock theft Nationwide was also recorded when comparing the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial year – The first quarter statistics. However, increase in stock theft cases were reported in these provinces: Free State (5,9%), KwaZulu-Natal (0,9%) and Mpumalanga (15,2%). Considerably, during the 2021/22 financial, the SAPS stock theft statistics – The first quarter monthly statistics indicated that during 01 March to 30 May 2021/22, while South Africa was on Lockdown Level 1; between April and May 2021, in the beginning of May 2021 to 15 June 2021, and when the country moved to Lockdown Level 2 and 16 June 2021, when the country was moved to Lockdown Level 3; the SAPS stock theft statistics – The first quarter monthly statistic were recorded as follows: April 2021 (2 200), May 2021 (2 316), and June 2020 (2 241); whereas, the 2020/21 financial year – The first quarter monthly statistics of 01 April to 30 June 2020/21 showcased the following numbers of stock theft reported cases: April 2020 (2 497), May 2020 (2 485), and June 2020 (2 363), therefore, comparing the 2020/21 and 2021/2022 – The first quarter monthly statistics, the stock theft case difference were as follows: Decline of 297 in April 2021, decline of 169 in May 2021, and decline of 122 in June 2021.

According to Roos (2021), livestock to the value of R1.24 billion was stolen in South Africa during the 2018/2019 financial year and police statistics indicate that between July and September 2020 more than 26 300 sheep and 14 000 cattle were reported stolen. The Red Meat Producers Organisation (RPO) stated that the farming industry suffers more than R800 million in direct losses annually from stock thefts, excluding unreported cases (Rondganger, 2016:2). As the result, many livestock farmers are starting to lower their herd sizes, while others decided to stop farming altogether. The affected livestock farmers agree that they must leave their businesses up for sale due to recurrent stock thefts and a lack of success in convicting perpetrators (Ngubane, 2015:1). Negatively, livestock demands in South Africa will start to exceed the supply, leaving many people unable to afford meat in the future (Doorewaard, 2020:14).

While considering the argument presented in this section; this study intends to explore the possibilities of using evidence of empirical research to understand the nature and extent of stock theft in the Limpopo Province. This was done by comparing the available statistics, literature studies and empirical findings on this subject. The significant of this study rests on the fact that limited research studies has been conducted on this province. Thus, it is envisaged that this study will be beneficial to the Anti-Stock theft structures by improving and enhancing their combative, preventive and investigative strategies geared towards effective policing of this crime.

### ***Problem Exposition: The Nature and Extent of Stock Theft***

Chelin (2019), Clack (2014a; and Clack, 2014b) and Geldenhuys (2012) share consensus that stock theft is not new problem, it can be traced back to 1806 with the highly recorded cases in the 1990s, expressed the Kwa-Zulu Natal Department of Community Safety and Liaison [KZN DCSL] (2008), it has just become organised in nature, occurring local [National] and elsewhere [Beyond South African borders - worldwide], further becoming biggest challenge to police efficiently. Owing to the escalation of this crime; effective responses to this crime are highly sought for the progression of this agricultural sector, National Stock Theft Prevention Forum [NSTPF] (2019). The increases of stock theft in the South

African rural areas require urgent attention (Chelin, 2019, Staff Writer, 2018, Phillips, 2018; and NSTPF, 2019) as it possess a serious threat to food security and bio-security (Zwane, van Marle-Köster, Greyling & Mapholi, 2013). This is a problematic. The policing strategies of this crime remains ineffective. To this course, policing this scourge should be prioritised (Clack, 2014; and Pakistan, 2014).

As stated earlier, by Bunei and Kariaga (2016:2), the challenge of stock theft has turned out to be a relentless in nature, hugely affecting food security and making a living of livestock farmers difficult in South African rural communities. George Herald (2018:8) states that this problem is distinctive and poses multifaceted challenges across farming communities across the world; and in South Africa, the farming society has been pleading to the local SAPS to consider stock theft as one of serious property-rated crimes. Maluleke, Mokwena and Motsepa (2016:257) share that even though the local SAPS prioritised stock theft from 2011, this crime is presently enormously worrying.

According to the SAPS (2020), the SAPS crime statistics for the 2019/2020 financial year showed that stock theft incidences in the country decreased by 4.2% compared to the previous financial year (2018/19) and the number of stock theft cases is 28 418. The provinces mostly impacted by this crime in 2019/2020 financial year are KwaZulu-Natal, Free State and Eastern Cape; it is reported that these provinces share an international border with Lesotho, which has a widespread of stock theft crises and cross border stock theft (SAPS, 2020; and Kynoch & Ulicki, 2000). There has been an increase of stock theft in Two (02) out of Nine (09) provinces in South Africa, namely: the Eastern Cape and Western Cape during this reporting period (2019/2020). The most reported number of stock theft cases were recorded as follows, Eastern Cape (6 800); KwaZulu-Natal with (6 252); Free State (3 785); Northwest (3 005); Mpumalanga (2 981); Limpopo (2 331); Northern Cape (1 259); Western Cape (1 011), and Gauteng (988). The Nationwide case differences between the financial year 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 shows the decrease of 1 254 (29 672-28 418).

According to SAPS (2020b), the 2020/2021 financial year second quarter statistics are indicated there 7 339 cases of stock theft crime, which shows the decline in 539 cases as compared to the previous financial year third quarter statistic of (2019/2020) which had 7 878 cases of stock theft. There was about 6,8% decrease in stock theft countrywide, when comparing the 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial year – The first quarters statistics. However, there were an increase in Northern Cape province (17,2%) for 2020/21 financial year third quarter statistics. The stock theft cases for second quarter 2020/21 financial year were showcased as follows: Eastern Cape (1 870), Free State (1 031), Gauteng (273), KwaZulu-Natal (1 808), Limpopo (650), Mpumalanga (838), Northwest (842), Northern Cape (279), and Western Cape (287). The stock theft cases difference for 2019/2021 financial year second quarter stock theft compared 2020/2021 second quarter stock theft statistics were portrayed as follows: Eastern Cape (-29), Free State (-155), Gauteng (-19), KwaZulu-Natal (-25), Limpopo (-120), Mpumalanga (-95), Northwest (-128), Northern Cape (+48), and Western Cape (-16).

The SAPS (2020c), further reveals that the 2020/2021 financial year, the stock theft third quarter statistics indicates that there were about 7 854 cases, which shows the decline in 583 stock theft cases, as compared to the previous financial year third quarter of SAPS statistics, projected to 2019/2020, which had 8 437 of stock theft cases. There was approximately 6,9% decline in stock theft Nationwide when comparing the 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial year third quarters statistics. However, there were an increase in the following provinces: Gauteng (1,9%), and Mpumalanga (0,7%) for 2020/21 financial year third quarter statistics. The stock theft cases for third quarter stock theft were as Eastern Cape (1 747), Free State (1 020), Gauteng (314), KwaZulu-Natal (2 018), Limpopo (556), Mpumalanga (865), Northwest (755), Northern Cape (326), and Western Cape (253). The stock theft cases difference for 2021/2022 third quarter stock theft compared 2020/2021 third quarter stock theft statistics were as follows: Eastern Cape (-135), Free State (-61), Gauteng (+6), KwaZulu-Natal (-105), Limpopo (-145), Mpumalanga (+6), Northwest (-88), Northern Cape (-19), and Western Cape (-42).

During 2020/2021 financial year – The third monthly stock theft statistics between 01 October 2020 to 31 December 2020 stock theft statistic were displayed as follows: October 2020 (2 739), November 2020 (2 430), and December 2020 (2 685); and the 2019/20 financial year – the third quarter monthly statistics between 01 April to 30 June 2020/21 were recorded as follows: October 2019 (2 928), November 2019 (2 741), and December 2019 (2 768), thus, comparing the 2019/20 and 2020/21 first quarters monthly statistics the stock theft case difference were as follows: decline of 189 in November, decline of 311 in October, and decline of 83 in December (SAPS, 2020c).

The SAPS (2021) went on to establish that the fourth quarter displayed the following stock theft statistics 2020/2021 (January 2021 to March 2021), about 6 089 cases of stock theft were recorded, which showed decline of 715 cases, as compared to the financial year fourth quarter statistic of 2020/21, which had 6 853 stock theft counts. This indicates that there was about 8% decline in stock theft Nationwide, comparing the previous years of (2019/2020) and 2020/21 financial years. The 2019/20 financial year - The fourth quarters stock theft monthly statistics of between 01 January 2020 to 31 March 2020 were indicated as follows: January 2021 (2 420), February 2021 (2 241), and March 2021 (2 146); and the stock theft monthly distribution of 2020/21 financial year of 01 January 2021 to 31 March 2021 - The fourth quarter statistics were displayed as follows: January 2021 (1 993), February 2021 (1 950), and March 2021 (2 192). The stock theft statistics comparison for 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial years, relating to the monthly stock theft cases difference showed that there was a decline of 427 cases in January 2021, a further decline of 291 cases in February 2021 and an increase of 46 cases in March 2021.

During the 2020/21 financial year – The fourth quarter of stock theft statistics indicated that only Gauteng province recorded an increase 17,6% while Mpumalanga recorded the similar figure as the previous quarter. The stock theft cases for first quarter stock theft statistics showcased the following: Eastern Cape (1 493), Free State (740), Gauteng (241), KwaZulu-Natal (1 448), Limpopo (446), Mpumalanga (1 448), Northwest (208), Northern Cape (640), and Western Cape (184). The stock theft cases difference for 2021/2022 first quarter stock theft, as compared to the 2020/2021 first quarter stock theft statistics were recorded as follows: Eastern Cape (-407), Free State (-100), Gauteng (-36), KwaZulu-Natal (-91), Limpopo (-38), Mpumalanga (0), Northwest (-7), Northern Cape (-110), and Western Cape [-47] (SAPS, 2021).

The SAPS (2021:84) also shares that the 2021/22 financial year – The first quarter stock theft statistics highlighted that there was 6 757 reported cases, which shows the decline in 588 cases as compared to the financial year first quarter statistic of 2020/21, which had 7 345 cases. About 8% decline in reported stock theft cases were recorded Nationwide, as compared to the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial year - The first quarter stock theft statistics. However, increases were further reported in these provinces: Free State (5,9%), KwaZulu-Natal (0,9%) and Mpumalanga (15,2%). The stock theft cases for first quarter stock theft were as Eastern Cape (1 522), Free State (897), Gauteng (231), KwaZulu-Natal (1 694), Limpopo (515), Mpumalanga (736), Northwest (698), Northern Cape (237), and Western Cape (227). The stock theft reported cases difference for 2021/2022 first quarter, as compared 2020/2021 first quarter, which were as follows: Eastern Cape (-398), Free State (+48), Gauteng (-20), KwaZulu-Natal (+15), Limpopo (-46), Mpumalanga (+9), Northwest (+7), Northern Cape (-61), and Western Cape [-58] (SAPS, 2020a)

As previously discussed, during the 2021/22 financial year – The first quarter stock theft monthly statistics between 01 March to 30 May 2021/22, during the lockdown period in South Africa; lockdown level 1, between April and May 2021, in the beginning of May to 15 June 2021, when the country was moved to lockdown level 2 and 16 June 2021, when it was moved to lockdown level 3, the stock theft reported cases for the first quarter monthly statistic were recorded as follows: April 2021 (2 200), May 2021 (2 316), and June 2020 (2 241); and the 2020/21 financial year first quarters monthly statistics (01 April to 30 June 2020/21) were as follows: April 2020 (2 497), May 2020 (2 485), and June 2020 (2 363),

therefore, comparing the 2020/21 and 2021/2022 first quarters monthly statistics the stock theft case difference were as follows: decline of 297 in April, decline of 169 in May, and decline of 122 in June (SAPS, 2020b).

Although there has been a decline in stock theft crime trends 2019/2020 in South Africa (SAPS, 2020a), the researcher views the number of cases as still high, alarming, and concerning in South African rural communities. In addition, there are number of strategies that have been developed to combat stock theft in South Africa and on its borders, but there has been little success in combating and reducing this crime. According to (Maluleke, 2014) policing stock theft seems to be neglectful; and the police's approach, measures, and strategies to the problem seem to be ineffective. Some of notable findings on contributory factors to stock theft shows that police officials are working together with criminals to steal property from farms (Donnermeyer, 2016:122). With that mentioned, the South African rural communities, Anti-Stock theft structures, including livestock farmers in South Africa do not trust the police and justice system (Courts); they consider them as corrupt and ineffective; and therefore, result to vigilantism in an attempt to curb stock theft (Kynoch & Ulicki, 2000).

Legislatively illustrations suggests that many relevant Acts pertaining to the preservation and protection of livestock in South Africa exists, including the following: Section 205(3) of the Constitution, 1996 of the Criminal Procedure Act [CPA] (No. 51 of 1977); legislation related to animal crime scene including the Stock Theft Act (No. 57 of 1959), Animal Identification Act (No.40 of 2000), Animal Welfare Act (No. of 1962), and Biodiversity Act (No. 10 of 2004), amongst others, Ramalekana (2016:6). For the purpose of this study, the Acts relevant to policing stock theft are the CPA, 1977, which relates to the gathering of evidence at a crime scene including animal crime scenes and gives investigators the power to collect all evidence related to the crime as part of their investigation and also provides that the perpetrator may be arrested and be taken to court to stand trial (Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries - DAFF, 2016); the Stock Theft Act, 1959 is implemented by the local SAPS to consolidate and amend the law relating to theft of stock and produce, Department of Justice and Constitutional Development [DoJ & CD] (1959); and the Animal Identification Act, 2002, which compels livestock owners to have identification marks for their animals, provides for prescription of identification marks, applications for their registration, prohibited marking of animals and registration of marking operators (Lombard, Van den Heever & Jammer, 2018).

According to Chelin (2019), stock theft costs the country billions of rand yearly. It also affects the local agricultural economy and has a negative impact on food security. Stock theft is not a new problem in South Africa. What is new is that it has transformed from petty theft by individuals to operations conducted by organised syndicates. Approximately '87% of stock theft involves some form of organised crime while 13% is for survival'. Stock theft is a global phenomenon and, as well as being a National problem, this crime also has transnational dimensions. In South Africa, all indications point to a growing transnational organised criminal element to the issue. Stock theft across the borders of South Africa and Lesotho has been an ongoing problem for years. The South African and Lesotho police's joint Operation Servamus resulted in the seizure of 117 stolen cattle, 107 stolen goats, Four (04) Sheep and Seven (07) Horses.

The *Modus Operandi (MO)* of livestock thieves depends on whether stock is stolen for survival or greed. If for survival, only a few animals will be stolen or slaughtered for their meat, with the thieves running off with what they can carry, leaving behind carcasses. If the motivation is greed, then the operation is more carefully planned by criminal syndicates. It usually involves a group of three to five individuals in a network. Usually the syndicates have a scout who watches the movement of the livestock and alerts the criminals. At the opportune time, the individuals illegally access the property and steal the animals, which are then loaded onto trucks and driven away. The *MO* of livestock thieves depends on whether stock is stolen for survival or greed. If for survival, only a few animals will be stolen or

slaughtered for their meat, with the thieves running off with what they can carry, leaving behind carcasses. If the motivation is greed, then the operation is more carefully planned by criminal syndicates. It usually involves a group of three to five individuals in a network. Usually the syndicates have a scout who watches the movement of the livestock and alerts the criminals. At the opportune time, the individuals illegally access the property and steal the animals, which are then loaded onto trucks and driven away. There have also been instances where farm workers and farmers were involved in stock theft by colluding with stock theft syndicates. The farm workers involved usually provide information about the farm to the criminals. Farmers collude to steal livestock from other farms (Chelin, 2019).

Regarding cross-border raids between South Africa and Lesotho, the stolen animals are hidden along the mountainous border. After some time they are moved across the border to Lesotho where the livestock is rebranded and sent back to South Africa. Once there, the stolen animals are laundered through stock auctions. This creates difficulty in actually proving that the livestock was stolen. Stock theft across the South Africa-Lesotho border also is not a one-way phenomenon. Livestock from Lesotho is stolen and taken into South Africa too, and then fed into the sale-of-stock system. Porous and poorly secured borders contribute to the problem. Large parts of the border fence and fence poles are stolen, there is a lack of capacity to monitor the long stretch of the border and the mountainous terrain is difficult to police. Such challenges create opportunities and trafficking routes for criminal networks to smuggle livestock, drugs and at times firearms across the border (Chelin, 2019).

Therefore, Maluleke (2014) provides that the livestock recovery is low, and the police are corrupt; and communities and farmers do not trust the police and courts and think that they are corrupt and ineffective (Kynoch & Ulicki, 2000). In addition, Donnermeyer (2016:122) state that the Criminal Justice System (CJS) is failing victims and the police are unable to control stock theft. Farmers are left frustrated when criminals appear in courts only to find that the sentences handed down fail to reflect the impact of the offenders' crimes and stock theft cases receive little attention and, when perpetrators are apprehended, many of them are released the next day. The perceived inadequacy of the CJS to successfully apprehend and prosecute these perpetrators does not seem to end with their arrest and prosecution, George Herald (2018:1).

## ***Methodology***

This qualitative study purposively selected Two (02) prominent SAPS members, with Brigadier and Captain ranks as participants to explore the use of empirical evidence in understanding the nature and extent of stock theft in the Limpopo Province. They all formed part of the semi-structured KIIs. This was coupled with non-empirical research design: Systematic review, projected to 2000-2021 data [Not in sequence], this research design identifies, describes available research literature 'using systematic and explicit accountable methods and pre-specified formalised tools for searching and integrating literature, moreover, the researcher may collect qualitative documents, for example; public documents, such as newspapers, minutes of meetings or official documents. Moreover, it is observed that one can ask questions of documents in the same ways as one might ask questions of research respondents (Gough, Oliver & Thomas, 2012:5; Punch, 2014:108; Creswell, 2014:190; and Matthews & Ross, 2010:282).

To accomplish this, the researcher visited the SAPS media releases, South African online newspapers/media reports, journal articles and internet searches (i.e. Electronic databases – Google Scholar, EbcHost, Emerald Insight, Jstor, ProQuest, Sabinet, Sage Online and Science Direct), dissertations and Servamus Magazines. Equally, a voice recorder and field notes were used to supplement information gathering during the adopted semi-structured KIIs. The collected data was analysed according to the inductive TCA method by reducing data into themes.

***Evidence of Empirical Research and Discussions: Limpopo Provincial Focus***

The following section provides evidence from the conducted fieldwork with the prominent SAPS members and offer discussions with the reviewed literature studies on the nature and extent of stock theft in general, while specifically focusing on Limpopo Province

***The Nature and Extent of Stock Theft in the Limpopo Province***

When they steal in the rural areas they supply the small business in the inner city, they cook daily and he should cater for the demand (Clients) who are catering for the government and private workers during lunch breaks. Very organised in nature, sophisticated trades, for example; Case No. Stock theft occurred at Frechly Farm in Vivo area in the 2020 period, about Eight (08) Cattle slaughtered; One (01) Cattle Heel hacked. Case No. 2 [Refer to the attached One – 01-Four-04 images in the following sections], the suspects were found in possession of suspected stolen Meat at Mogwadi/Bochum crossing. The Mogwadi SASP Members stopped a White Volkswagen (VW) Bus. Three suspects ran away, unfortunately, only 01 suspect was arrested. During investigation, the SAPS official found Meat in plastic bags. The suspect latter mentioned that he picked the suspects up with the meat and he will be able to give the names of other Two (02) suspects. With the driver who have the names of the others involved, including Crime Intelligence (CI) and SAPS STUs can follow-up / investigate so that the syndicate can be arrested.



Figure 1-4. Suspected stolen Meat in Mogwadi/Bochum of Limpopo Province

Source: Mabasa (2021)



### ***The Contributory Factors of Stock Theft in the Limpopo Province***

They do not have pond they let them roam around the grazing area, which is limited, they let them outside thinking they will collect them the following day, this practice place livestock to potential danger against the stock thieves, the livestock often graze near the Polokwane City on the open government land with pastures, their owners do not show up at times, as they are scared of government officials who will request permits for such grazing exercises, they think the government will be on their case and fine them an amount of more than R1000.00.

Alleged stock thief around Polokwane (Operating in-and-around *Moletjie* and *Mashashane*) reportedly sells the meat to the street vendors (*Shisa Nyama*) by the Taxi rank, they are regarded as their great market operating in the inner city by the *Mashashane* Taxi pavements and the adjacent informal settlement, for example, one of the potential stock thief was staying in a shack, with Two (02) room, 01 for sleeping, and the other one for alleged stolen meat, it is used as separate storage. Upon arriving in the stock theft scene; meant was covering all corners of the shack, the wife chopping meat, while the husband was sleeping, meaning he was possible working a night shift, it was also discovered that he does not have a Car, he often hires transport to deliver the stolen meat. While questioning the wife, she said that the husband he is only the mastermind, he just asked her to chop the meat.

In another operation, during the 'stop and search for Taxi drivers,' the Taxi drivers all hinted that, the local SAPS members should stop what they doing to them, as there are serious matters, which they should focus on, they pointed out that the is someone who is selling the meat for the taxi rank traders, however, they shared that they do not know where he stays, positively, they told the local SAPS members that he is located behind the Taxi rank, 'almost Ten (10) shacks there, search all of them, one of them said. Upon arrival, we searched the 02 shacks, the other shacks were looked, that is where he was caught sleeping and arrested, it is believed that he is a stock theft expert, after calling his Lawyer, upon arrival he ask us if we took the meat to the laboratory to prove that it is Beef, as there is no law that is against keeping meat in the house, or the regulation that determines how many/specific kilogrammes (Kg's) of meat should be kept in the house, I can confess that he have a smart legal representative, this should be improved in this sector. Negatively, the private bodies like Lancet, must test the meat to establish the kind of livestock and the local nearest butcheries should be efficiently used to scan kg's of the located meat. Moreover, they are having smart lawyers, calling for this sector to be urgently improved.

### ***Maintaining the Chain of Custody: Building Stock Theft Cases in the Limpopo Province***

We [SAPS officials] went to the local butcher to scan Kgs, charged the suspect with possession of suspected stolen Beef meat, dangerous weapons [I.e. More than 30 knives and ropes – Having all necessary materials for execution, and Three - 03 livestock Livers found in his possession representing 03 slaughtered livestock], and he tried to bribe the local SAPS members with R5000.000, as he was a foreigner, with no formal place of residence, no stand number, no job and no passport, he remained in custody by the time of drafting this study. During the arrest, he declared more than R20.000 and his Lawyer said that having more money is not illegal nor a crime, he used 02 essential loopholes against us, laboratory determination of meat and Kg's. These limitations remain of utmost importance in solving this crime and it is currently lacking in the SAPS, something for the SAPS management to strongly consider urgently.

### ***Prevention, Combating and Investigating Stock Theft Cases in the Limpopo Province***

Resources such as laboratory [In the province can ease this process and protect losing of samples], not relying on the private sector for scanning, during the night; the local SAPS members have to wait for the private companies, which often open during the day, further disadvantaging this sector, the livestock owners are not taking full responsibility of their livestock keeping. The SAPS STUs in the inner Polokwane City caters for the surrounding rural areas. Any person can arrest them, however, in Court;

they often lose the case, as the supporting document from the laboratory to prove ownership and livestock type [Meat type] seem to be the biggest huddles to date (2022).

The handling of stock theft cases, considering its nature and extent is very problematic, as it does not only rely on the amount of meat found in the stock theft scenes, accurate photos are sought, voice records are said to be inadmissible in court, unless the Investigation Officer (IO) apply for the use of such and the Magistrate can either confirm or reject such application to be used, and they can be rendered insufficient. In this solving this case; the ‘Uniformed SAPS officers’ working in hand-in-hand with the local SAPS STUs, were called to the SAPS Local Criminal Record Centre (LCRC), they to validate fingerprints and to link the suspect with the collected evidence samples [Knives, *Pangas*, and other Deoxyribonucleic Acid – DNA sources - And to determine time span of use), this is the most effective and celebrated unit in the local SAPS [Polokwane City]. The local municipality must ensure the traders they should have receipts of the meat sold, from which butchery, validate whether it is valid [Validating the dates of purchase and the name of the shop], as it can be faked oftenly, the local SAPS STUs should go to the supplier to understand where he/she get the meat supplied, to identify the ‘Chain of Custody.’ This can work positively for traceability purposes.





Figure 5-9. Suspected stolen Meat, Weapons and Ropes, as well as recovered Money in the Limpopo Province

Source: Manganyi (2021)

Chelin (2019), Clack (2014a; and Clack, 2014b) and Geldenhuys (2012) and KZN DCSL (2008) share that this crime is not new and it is evolving into an organised scale beyond South African borders, with traces of global landscape. This crime is increasing to greater proportions, confirmed NSTPF (2019), requiring for urgent intervention, as supported by these authors (Chelin, 2019, Staff Writer, 2018, Phillips, 2018; and NSTPF, 2019), as it is posing a serious threat to the food security (Zwane *et al.* 2013) and current ineffective strategies of policing this crime, high prioritising is highly sought (Clack, 2014; and Pakistan, 2014).

The use of evidence of empirical research to understand the the nature and extent of stock theft in South Africa was explored in this study. This study verified that the occurrence of stock theft is widespread (Nature) and available statistics (Extent) in South Africa in general and Limpopo Province specifically. Stock theft in South Africa is a National crisis, with severe consequences. This crime is currently causing elusive chaos affecting many rural livestock farmers, as there is no sufficient relief for those adversely affected by incidences of stock theft, as current strategies seem to be ineffective. Therefore, an urgent intervention is required from all Anti-Stock theft structures across Limpopo Province.

The researcher views on the much needed interventions are as follows, there should a representative body that all livestock owners and relevant stakeholders (I.e. SAPS, DAFF, RPO, and stock theft structures, among others) form part of. This can allow the livestock owners to collaborate effectively with these stakeholders to deter stock thieves from committing stock theft, prevent, control, and reduce stock theft in South Africa. The researcher is of the view that there is a room for improvement for current stock theft legislations, thus, the amendments of these Acts are highly needed to re-address glaring shortfalls and make it easier for this crime to persist. The study found that solidarity, co-operation, collaboration, and communication could be some of best ways to combat, prevent and investigate stock theft correctly.

In essence, if the livestock owners, abattoirs, auctioneers, and barter agents, butcheries, Anti-Stock theft structures (I.e. SAPS STUs, livestock farmers, livestock farming unions, and CPF's, to name the few), government department (I.e. Department of Home Affairs – DHA and DAFF), courts, the police and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) co-operate, collaborate, and communicate the solutions for stopping or reducing this crime can be established, the investigation of stock theft can be achieved, and this will result in the recovery of livestock and imprisonment of stock thieves.

One of this study objectives was to assess the extent of stock in South Africa, and it was found that the prevalence of stock theft is high in the country which means more livestock or stock are stolen in the country. By assessing the extent of stock in South Africa, the researcher was able to evaluate the effectiveness of current legislative framework and structures that police stock theft in South Africa. In South Africa, livestock is not only source of food, some animals are used as source of transport, livestock is also a source of wealth, can be a source of income, are used to plough fields, produce wool, in some cultures can be used to marry (*I.e. Lobola*), among others. Therefore, the livestock owners, relevant stakeholders, stock theft legislations and structures that police stock theft should come with effective methods to prevent, reduce, and break the cycle of stock theft in South Africa. If this can be achieved, it will mean that the legislation and structures for policing stock theft in the country are effective, thus, the livestock owners will not live-in fear that anytime their stock will be stolen, will make income, own more herds, as a results job will be created in the country and most importantly the economy will grow.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The relation between the local municipality (I.e. Community safety and liaison and local SAPS, STUs, and Anti-Stock theft structures, and small businesses) should be improved to break the exiting chain of stock theft commission in the Limpopo Province, failure to accomplish this can be detrimental to the livestock sector, as the prevention of this crime calls for adequate networking and collaborated efforts from the relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, the illegal inform the Department of Human Settlement (DHS) should readdress settlements adjacent to the inner city (Polokwane City) and DHA should screen foreigners, they should stay in the country while documented as they often commit property-related crimes, such as the stock theft and get away with it, without any form of traceability. The organised nature of this crime should be fully understood by all relevant parties. The local SAPS members at police station level should be trained on how to handle cases of this nature as many cases are lost owing to insufficient evidence, which can be inadmissible in court, this calls for urgent change, the SAPS STUs and SAPS police stations should not be treated separately, the should collaborate to work in collation with other interested stakeholders to effectively work against this crime.

The findings on the nature of stock theft revealed that the incidence of stock theft is widespread, and the prevalence of stock theft is high in South Africa. The general trends of stock theft from 2018/2019-2020/21 is unstable. This study found that the incidence of stock theft has been growing an alarming rate thus, the researcher calls for effective legislation and structures to police stock theft. To achieve this, the researcher recommends that stock theft legislations, for example; the Stock Theft Act, 1959 and Animal Identification Act, 2002, amongst others and some of the Sections or the Acts be amended, re-drafted, or new Sections or Acts introduced nor added on the existing Sections to improve their effectiveness in deterring stock thieves from stealing livestock, and enhance the combative, preventive and investigative strategies of responding to this scourge.

In addition, the researcher *recommends* that all the Anti-Stock theft structures, including the local SAPS STUs should be more proactive than reactive by emphasising measures such as, immediate reporting of suspected stock theft, patrols at the farms, conducting roadblocks after livestock stock has been reported stolen, not allowing the movement of livestock at night, and monitoring abattoirs. The researcher recommends that the fight against stock theft should not be the livestock owners' sole responsibility the government department, CJS, and relevant stakeholder should assist in alleviating the livestock owners the burden of fighting this crime alone. For example, government department can assist emerging farmers with money for buying fences, cameras, and for paying 'Herdsman;' the court could impose harsh sentences to offenders. The researcher also recommends that all stakeholders in a fight against stock theft should work together co-operatively, find the cause of this crime and ways to prevent and reduce it.

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