

Set up task force to curb cattle theft

OUR livestock farmers, especially the small-timers, are a special breed of highly versatile and experienced people. The backbone of our livestock industry, they are keeping the business alive despite the acute challenges facing them today.

There are hundreds of small-time farmers all over the country. With the right incentives, guidance and advice by the relevant authorities, they could all be mobilised to maximise food production for the local market to reduce our reliance on food imports.

I wish to alert the authorities, especially the police and Veterinary Services Department (DVS), to the incidents of cattle/goat thefts that have been increasing over the years. Cattle rustlers are not only pushing our small-time farmers to the edge, they are also posing a serious food safety issue as they use drugs on the animals when stealing them.

The meat from these drugged animals is not safe and, if consumed, could cause serious medical complications. Furthermore, the stolen animals are likely to be slaughtered in unhygienic environments, and the meat may be tainted with toxic chemicals or contaminated with dangerous microbes.

Cattle thieves are also known to



subject the animals to extreme cruelty, like packing them into a modified car to be transported for slaughter. One just has to Google to see the heart-wrenching pictures of cattle stuffed in cars.

To reiterate, the police and DVS should not view livestock theft lightly as it involves various issues including food safety, misuse of controlled (dangerous) drugs, animal cruelty and the crime of robbing a farmer of his property (economy).

It is apparent from these livestock theft incidents that there is a well-organised syndicate operating.

It is mind-boggling why our authorities are finding it so difficult to stamp out livestock theft.

The DVS has all the contacts (intelligent reports) in the livestock industry and should by now, with the cooperation of the police, have nabbed the thieves. The failure or long delay of the authorities to act on the farmers' reports

of animal theft has, on several occasions, led to farmers taking the law into their own hands. The authorities should view the plight of our cattle farmers seriously and consider setting up a special task force to curb this menace.

The public should also be educated on the dangers of purchasing and consuming meat from illegal sources.

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