

A MESSAGE FROM PHIL CLINE

The need to protect citizens and businesses from crime does not stop at the city limits. Farmers and ranchers make significant investments in land, equipment, structures, vehicles and animals- assets which are vulnerable because of their location in rural areas. Vast tracks of unguarded land present special challenges for law enforcement.

Years of nurturing and monetary investment have been lost overnight as cattle are stolen or slaughtered in the field, rows of citrus trees stripped of their fruit, tractors and farm equipment stolen and transported out of state. Some land owners were resorting to arming themselves before going into the fields to harvest what they had grown. It is against this backdrop that the state's first rural crime program was born in Tulare County.

The Rural Crime Prevention Program has dramatically reduced crime and organized the agricultural industry for its own protection. We are showing the rest of the state and the nation not only that it can be done, but how to do it by establishing a network of task forces in the Central Valley. Another success has been a program called the **ACTION Project** (Agricultural Crime Technology Information and Operations Network) which is responsible for coordinating an eleven-county effort to bring high-tech equipment and techniques to the battle against rural crime. A training and information center here in Tulare has also been established to help us mobilize a nationwide effort.

Crime can destroy the agricultural industry we hold dear. **We are not going to let that happen.**

FURTHER INFORMATION:

To report a crime call the Tulare County Sheriff's Office: (559) 733-6218

For a crime in progress or life threatening situation DIAL 911 for police assistance

**Tulare County District Attorney's Office
Agricultural Crime Investigations**
(559) 685-4850

**Tulare County Sheriff's Department
Agricultural Crimes Unit**
36000 Road 112
Visalia, CA 93291
(559) 735-1825 or 800-370-9055
Fax: (559) 741-4301

FURTHER INFORMATION ON AG CRIME:

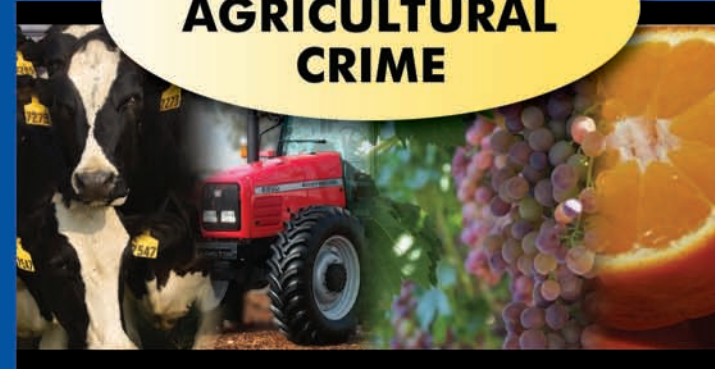
The **ACTION** Project
701 W. Center Street
Visalia, CA 93291
(559) 685-4850
www.agcrime.net

Tulare County Sheriff's Department
(559) 735-1825
www.tccoagunit.com

Tulare County District Attorney's Office
(559) 733-6411
www.da-tulare.org

This project was supported by Grant No. 2008-DD-BX-0425 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office of Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not represent the official position or policies of the United States Department of Justice.

PREVENTING AGRICULTURAL CRIME





The Rural Crime Bill, based upon a proposal written by District Attorney, Phil Cline, created the **Agricultural Crime Prevention Program** in 1996. As a partnership between the District Attorney and Tulare County Sheriff's Office, the program's main goal is to provide protection for farmers and ranchers. Innovative methods of addressing crime as well as vigorous prosecutions have led to more than 2,000 investigations and the recovery of over \$5 million worth of property.

LAWS INTENDED TO PROTECT YOU

California law protects you against theft, vandalism and trespass.

- The theft of farm equipment and ag chemicals with a value of \$400 or more is a felony. The theft of crops and domestic fowl with a value of \$100 is also a felony. The theft of livestock, despite its value, is a felony.
- If someone enters land that has been posted with a "No Trespassing" sign or land that is under cultivation without permission and fails to leave immediately upon your request, he or she is guilty of a trespass. Trespasses are either misdemeanors or infractions. (Penal Code 602 (k))
- Trespass covers tampering with and/or destroying any notice forbidding trespass or hunting on the property of another, tampering with a lock on a gate, or discharging a firearm on the property of another.

- A person who damages or destroys agricultural property or land is guilty of vandalism. Vandalism that causes more than \$400 worth of damage to agricultural property is a felony. If under this amount, it is considered a misdemeanor. (Penal Code 594)
- If someone receives your stolen property, you are entitled to bring a lawsuit for three times the amount of your actual loss, plus the costs of the lawsuit and reasonable attorney's fees. (Penal Code 496 (c))

Note: A felony is a crime that is punishable by death or imprisonment in state prison for more than one year. A misdemeanor is punishable by imprisonment in the county jail for less than one year. An infraction is a crime punishable by a fine.

Any ideas on how these laws can be improved? Contact the Rural Crime Prevention Unit: (559) 624-1054

13 STRATEGIES TO PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY AGAINST THEFT

- 1 Obtain and mark your property with an Owner Applied Number (OAN)- a personal number which is recorded in a computer. When stolen equipment is recovered with this number, the rightful owner can be located. To participate in the OAN program, call the **ACTION Project** (559) 624-1054 or go online at www.agcrime.net.
- 2 If possible, lock equipment inside a barn or shed each night, preferably near the house. Make sure doors and windows are secure.
- 3 If you must leave equipment in the field overnight, put it where you or your neighbor can see it.
- 4 Never park machinery within easy access to the road where it is vulnerable to theft and vandalism.
- 5 Remove rotors, distributor caps or batteries from motorized equipment left outside for long periods of time.
- 6 Brand, mark, tattoo, or identify your stock in some manner.
- 7 Do not leave tools or other equipment in the back of a pickup truck. Locked tool boxes are a deterrent to thieves.
- 8 Secure gas pumps, gas tanks, storage bins and grain elevators with strong locks, sturdy padlocks with hardened steel hasps, or dead bolts with a one-inch throw.
- 9 Keep storage areas neat and well-organized to keep track of equipment and discourage potential thieves.
- 10 Lock up chemicals; if stolen, they can be resold.
- 11 Notify your local law enforcement agency of your chemical delivery and storage sites.
- 12 Make a note of any suspicious vehicle or person that you notice and send the information to the Sheriff's Office.
- 13 Avoid feeding your livestock next to a county or public road. Livestock can become accustomed to this and may approach any vehicle.