



Farm & Ranch Security

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Farm and ranch security is a growing concern in the United States. Common threats include biological, chemical, radiological, theft of supplies, equipment and materials, and property damage. Perpetrators may include a terrorist group, extremist organization, drug manufacturers, or ill-intentioned individuals. These groups see farms and ranches as an easy target due to their remote locations, easy access, and lack of surveillance.

Anhydrous ammonia, for example, is stolen from nurse tanks located on farms and used to produce methamphetamine. Large quantities of ammonium nitrate fertilizer have been used to make bombs killing hundreds of people and causing catastrophic damage. Fuel storage tanks are often left unsecured and accessible to would-be criminals.

Agriculture producers must realize the potential for these security threats and do what they can to protect themselves, their families, co-workers and the general public.

I. SECURITY MEASURES

Though it's practically impossible to stop all security threats, there are some measures farmers and ranchers can take to improve security.

1. **Get Insurance Coverage:** The first step should be to protect yourself and your business from liability if a security breach endangers the general public. Get insurance coverage that protects against theft, vandalism, pesticide or chemical spills, and/or terrorist acts committed on your farm. Invite your insurance agent to visit and inspect your property to assess security risks and hazards and to review coverage protections. Law enforcement and fire department personnel can also help to identify equipment and supplies that would be sought and used to perpetrate criminal acts.
2. **Restrict Unauthorized Access:** Restricting access includes installing physical and procedural measures. The reason farms and ranches are such easy targets for criminal activity is their remote locations and the ability to roam with relative ease while encountering almost no surveillance. To protect against trespassing:
3. **Install secure fencing and gates** and frequently check their condition. Look for signs of forced entry.
4. **Affix No Trespassing signs** to all gates and at strategic locations along fences.
5. **Consider attaching other signs** or messages that would deter would-be trespassers such as " *This farm is under 24-hour surveillance* ."
6. **Install security cameras and motion-activated lights** at high priority areas.

Procedural measures include:

1. Maintain only one entry and exit point through which all visitors and contractors must travel.
2. Establish check-in and check-out procedures for any and all visitors, making them a requirement.
3. Use visitor identification badges to ensure the safety of your employees and visitors.
4. **Monitor Employees:** Agriculture operations that hire many employees should establish employment procedures that help protect the agricultural operation and other employees.

Agriculture employers should:

1. Complete a thorough background check on each new hire.
2. Ask for and check all employee references.
3. Notify potential employees that your operation will report and file criminal charges against any employee that breaks the law.
4. Make existing employees aware of the potential for specific criminal activity or terrorist threats at the facility. Maintain an open-door policy for employees to report suspicious activity. Educate employees that work in sensitive areas to restrict access to anyone that cannot show proper identification. Workers should report any and all suspicious activity to a supervisor or security person immediately.

Suspicious activity includes:

1. Employees that stay unusually late or arrive exceptionally early for work.
2. Employees that attempt to access files, information, or areas outside of their responsibility.
3. Employees that ask questions on sensitive subjects, or about the accessibility to fertilizer, chemical, or fuel storage facilities.
4. Employees that tamper with sensitive equipment or potentially hazardous materials.

II. AGRO-TERRORISM

According to the Center for Domestic Preparedness "agro-terrorism" is "the deliberate target of the agriculture and food production system with the intent to disrupt, destroy or alter the production of food through the use of diseases". Agro-terrorism also can mean the introduction of disease-causing bacteria spores, viruses through insects and other vectors that carry diseases to infect host plants and animals, causing widespread damage to the food supply and economy.

Foreign diseases can enter the United States by accident, such as an immigrant bringing along a favorite animal or fruit, or by natural means, such as a free-ranging animal carrying it with them while migrating. Diseases are robust, often evolving to withstand sunlight, heat, moisture, etc. This means they are easy to spread, either intentionally or by accident.

To protect against agro-terrorism, agriculture producers should:

1. Make safety the main priority at your facility and report all suspicious activity.
2. Give authorities copies of maps of your farm, ranch, or facility that clearly indicate utility services shut-off points, and areas that house potentially dangerous materials.
3. Restrict access to crops and material storage facilities.

4. Contact the local veterinarian, plant pathologist, and the USDA's Area Veterinarian in Charge and Area Emergency Coordinator to determine what to do in case of a terrorist threat or terrorist act.