

Keeping Crime Out of Your Backyard



Tips for Preventing Crime in
Alberta's Rural Communities



INTRODUCTION

Alberta rural areas, once thought to be immune to crime relative to urban centres, have seen increases in property crime particularly over the past two years. Acreages and farms have lost personal items, vehicles, farm equipment and even livestock, much like urban properties.

This short brochure is designed to provide property owners in rural Alberta with tips to help curb unwanted access to their property and make them unattractive to criminals.



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Where to start?

The best place to start when making your crime prevention plan is to figure out what you have to lose. Once you know what your protection priorities are, it's easier to map out the best security for each one.

Obviously, insurance is there once a loss has happened, but losses are traumatic, time-consuming and heart-breaking, so let's start with trying not to have one in the first place.

What do you have that you want to protect?

- Home and contents
- Vehicles
- Your surroundings
- Farm Implements and Tools
- Farm Equipment
- ATVs, snowmobiles, recreational vehicles
- Livestock

These are the most common categories for items we see stolen from rural properties

You may have some or all of these, but can isolate what you need from the information that follows



Home & Contents



Most of us know the more important things to consider when protecting our homes, but here's a refresher:

- Have a monitored alarm system
- Lock all doors when home, all doors and windows when away
- Ensure your alarm sticker is prominently displayed where criminals can see it
- Install motion detector lights strategically around your home
- Have security cameras with remote ability on your mobile phone
- Use interior lighting timers to change your lighting from day to day
- Arrange to leave a key with a neighbour you trust or arrange for a professional home-sitter to check the home regularly
- Hire a pet-sitter to look after the pets in your own home in lieu of a kennel, if you feel comfortable doing so
- Leave curtains or blinds partially open
- Photograph, video and serial number your important belongings - keep the records in a safe deposit box at your bank
- Keep important items locked in a safe on the premises that cannot be stolen, if not at your bank
- DO NOT have a key rack with all your keys where thieves can access them - keep all keys out of sight

Don't be put off by the cost to implement some of these safeguards - they are usually far less expensive than the cost of the loss - insurance is no compensation when irreplaceable items are gone



Vehicles

- Keep vehicles locked and don't leave keys in the vehicle
- Don't leave valuables in the vehicle, especially where visible
- Don't leave keys accessible on a rack where thieves can find them
- Keep vehicles close to your home, or stored in a building
- Park vehicles where well-lit
- Make sure you don't leave vehicles unattended on open land



Your Surroundings



Most rural properties are attractive because they are surrounded by open land and out of site of their neighbours or someone that would recognize activity as suspicious.

Here are some tips for preventing access to your property:

- Have signs posted along your fence indicating that you have security systems in place, or are part of a crime watch community
 - If you don't have rural crime watch, find out how to set it up and get involved
 - Check fencing regularly and ensure it is in a good state of repair
- Install gates at all access points to your property and keep them **locked at all times**
 - Install posts at the end of your driveway that indicate by a signal in your home (audible sound like a beep) when someone has entered onto your property
 - Ensure your main driveway access is equipped with a locking gate, or access code and ensure each authorized person had their own code
 - Keep your lawn areas cut and tidy, windows and doors clear of bushes
 - Do not block the perimeter of your building with tall trees
 - Ensure all outbuildings, storage tanks, gas reserves, are equipped with locks and are kept locked unless in use - locks with keypads are most convenient for this purpose
 - Ensure your address is plainly visible so emergency vehicles are able to find your property when necessary
 - Consider installing electric fencing to discourage would-be thieves from climbing it for access - ensure this is clearly marked on the fenceline

Farm Implements & Tools



- Install a secure shed, cupboards, or clear a space in an existing outbuilding, and keep items like small tools, harnesses, tack, tagging equipment, animal pharmaceuticals locked up and out of view
- Have expensive items marked or engraved for identification if stolen
- Videotape or photograph equipment and store it in a large safe or safety deposit box
- Firearms must be stored according to legislation, however, they should be locked away when not in use and not left inside vehicles on gunracks, nor visible or accessible when stored



Farm Equipment



Farming equipment is expensive, which makes it an attractive target to those who cannot afford to purchase their own and those who are able to fence it quickly. Because of its size, most would never question someone removing equipment from your land. Who would dare to steal something that large? That's exactly how these thefts are successful. Did you know that for as little as \$100, you can install a GPS tracker on your equipment?

- Keep your equipment locked and inaccessible
- Do not leave keys in the ignition, or equipment idling when you are not there
- Don't refuel equipment or vehicles at night - wait to refuel them in the morning
- Ensure your gas and liquid fertilizer tanks are tamperproof and chained to something immovable wherever possible
- Ensure there are motion detector lights in storage areas to discourage intruders



ATVs, Snowmobiles and RVs

- Keep all vehicles locked, out of site and inaccessible
- Equip them with a GPS, or store them in a locked shed or building when not in use
- Keep trailers out of site
- Don't leave vehicles on trailers unless they are secured within a building



Livestock & Crops



- All livestock should be properly tagged or microchipped - microchips are preferable
- Limit access to livestock by ensuring it is kept in a locked, gated field
- Retain current records of all livestock
- Check and regularly count your animals
- Keep crops protected and locked
- Keep storage organized so a theft is noticed

General Preventive Measures

- Don't hide keys in mailboxes, under mats or vehicle floormats, flower pots or "key hidiers" - everyone knows about these & thieves take advantage of the fact that you feel your security needs are different from the "big city"
- Consider changing your locks to keypads
- Invest in security cameras that can be accessed from your mobile phone and have an app that alerts you when someone is on your property
- Never broadcast that you are going on a trip - tell a neighbour you can trust and ask them to check your property from time to time
- Make sure to leave second cars or trucks conspicuously parked in your yard, or have a neighbour park theirs in your yard from time to time to make it look occupied
- Don't announce your vacation plans on Social Media, or post pictures while you are away - leave them for when you return
- Caution your children not to spread the word that you are going on vacation
- Ensure you stop mail delivery or arrange to have someone pick it up
- Participate in your local Crime Watch program, or find out how to set one up

Talk to your insurance broker about loss prevention and proper protection. Look for this symbol when you buy insurance

