

Monitoring and Surveillance: Keys to Identifying Suspicious Activities

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Understandable heightened awareness exists today about what takes place in our communities and around the farm. To become a "proficient" observer and reduce opportunistic crimes around your home, farm, and community consider the following tips:

- **Light it up!** Increase lighting during the evening and night hours around buildings and structures. Many options are available for outside lighting such as dusk-to-dawn lights, motion detectors, or the traditional floodlights operated manually or by a timer.
- **Alarm it!** With today's technology you can buy alarm systems to fit your needs as well as your budget. Alarms for your home or business can be as simple as alarming a door, window, or room. Another option would be to alarm the entire house or building. Alarms can be monitored by security agency or law enforcement, depending on availability in your area. Alarms can be programmed to call you when activated. Interestingly, stickers and signs indicating the use of alarm systems also have proven to be effective deterrents.
- **Report it!** Call 911 or local law enforcement authorities about suspicious activities that you observe *before* you try to rationalize what is occurring. If you "feel" something is out of place or you can't figure out why something doesn't feel right, report it to 911. It is always better to have a "police car" on the way before you do anything else. If it turns out to be nothing, just call 911 back and indicate so.

It is very important to know whom to call if you are concerned about suspicious activities on your farm. Besides calling law enforcement you may also need to call your veterinarian, USDA office, or other trusted partner. Have a list of important phone numbers readily available so you can call at a moment's notice.

Also think about doing the following:

- Try to minimize the number of visitors that you have on your farm, and keep account of their whereabouts. In the case of hunters, have them report to you when they are hunting on the farm, and have them park their vehicles in easily identified and monitored locations.

- Use a perimeter fence to keep vehicles off the farm. Now may be a good time to install a farm gate and/or close access to a field road that is no longer of use.
- Get to know your employees; ask relevant but nonintrusive questions on a somewhat regular basis. Encourage dialogue in order to determine a person's behavior. Behavioral changes can be an indicator of drug use, personnel problems, psychological issues, etc.
- Always clean up after yourself. Make sure that your pesticide and fertilizer facilities are locked and your equipment, including your tractors and grain and feed storage bins, are secure.
- When working with animals, make sure to clean up between movements of livestock and be especially mindful of monitoring animals for signs of disease. Always isolate new herd introductions. Remember to implement the biosecurity guidelines that have been available for quite some time. If you need a fresh copy of biosecurity guidelines, contact your veterinarian, Cornell Cooperative Extension office, or commodity group. The adoption of biosecurity guidelines will go a long way in helping you reduce the chance of either an accidental or purposeful introduction of infectious animal diseases.
- When working with milk cows that you have concerns about, minimize undue outside influences on your herd:
 - Consider the use of the "quick (snap) test" on your bulk milk tanks on a regular basis in order to determine if antibiotics are present in your raw milk, and continue to use this test until such concerns subside.
 - Lock your milk house when no one is using it.
 - Install and use a lock on the flip-up lid of your bulk tank.
 - Install surveillance equipment wherever practical, and keep a tape back-up of at least a month.
 - Restrict access to your cows, bulk tank, milking parlor, and milk house whenever possible.
- Ultimately, sharpening your skills as an observer requires experience and networking with your neighbors and community. The more you know and are aware of your surroundings, the more proficient you will become at knowing what is suspicious as well as reducing opportunistic crimes.

For more information about crime prevention on your farm, contact your local Sheriff's Office or New York State Police, or your local Cornell Cooperative Extension office.

Sources: Offices of the Sheriff – Monroe, Livingston and Wyoming Counties; New York State Police – Troop E

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