

CATTLE THEFTS

Brand inspectors lack power

Cattle group wants inspectors to have more authority when a theft is suspected

BY KAREN BRIERE

REGINA BUREAU

MOOSE JAW, Sask. — Producers at a Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association district meeting here want brand inspectors to have more power when it comes to dealing with cattle theft.

They say they don't get enough help from the RCMP.

District 2 director Philip Lynn said the board and the RCMP met after the SCA annual meeting last January, in which a resolution was passed asking for dedicated RCMP officers to handle cattle thefts, but didn't get far.

"The RCMP resources are challenged, with both people and funds," Lynn told the meeting.

"The SCA has requested (a) dedicated livestock officer, but it was denied."

Cattle producers have long complained that RCMP constables don't have a livestock background and don't understand the seriousness of the problem.

They say the RCMP could better investigate when thefts are reported and share information with

other detachments.

"We need to get them involved to track down theft, but quite honestly, unless we have somebody dedicated that knows the lay of the land and knows the cattle industry, you might as well send them on a wild goose chase," Lynn said.

Instead, cattle producers must rely on brand inspectors, but that presents another problem.

SCA chair Bill Jameson, who sits on the board of Livestock Services of Saskatchewan, which took over brand inspection from the province, said he was surprised to learn inspectors have no power when it comes to suspected thefts.

LSS can't act even if a producer believes he knows where his stolen horses or cattle are, he said.

"You pay \$2.65 a head for brand inspection services, but if there's a problem, there's nothing we can do about it," he said.

LSS suggests producers go to the RCMP, which in turn could ask for help from LSS, but that takes the problem right back to the original concern, Jameson said.

He said two RCMP constables are

on staff in Alberta to deal with cattle theft. As well, the province's inspection organization, Livestock Identification Services, has the power to go onto land, count cattle and investigate.

"It's shocking, and I for one want that changed," he said of the Saskatchewan situation.

The meeting passed a resolution to take to the SCA annual meeting that calls for the organization to lobby the province to extend enforcement and investigative powers for the LSS.

Another resolution passed at the Moose Jaw meeting asks the province to remove the designation of wolves as fur bearing animals in agricultural areas so that farmers can protect their livestock without trappers' licenses.

Another motion asked for the repeal of the Horned Cattle Purchases Act because the administration costs of collecting levies for sending horned cattle to market exceeds the revenue. A similar resolution was defeated at last year's annual meeting.

karen.briere@producer.com