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## PRESS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*By UNMC, Central States Center for Agricultural  
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### FARM SITE SECURITY

#### ***Smile – You're on Camera!***

Emerging technologies such as mapping and artificial intelligence potentially give trespassers and culprits remote access to rural farm sites. If use of these systems results in physical trespass, property and livestock owners can help protect themselves by using camera security systems to capture information and/or alert property owners to unusual activity any time of the day or night.

In recent years, some 75% of farmers have reported trespass or burglary on their property. Video surveillance is commonly used for remote monitoring, facility protection loss prevention and vandalism deterrence. Some camera systems don't require internet access or power cords.

South Dakota State University Extension Livestock Stewardship Field Specialist and Beef Quality Assurance Coordinator, Heidi Carroll, says a camera system can serve both as a security tool and be used for managing overall farm activities.

"Having motion-activated cameras set up around a barn, entryways to the property or other sites where regular activity occurs can help monitor suspicious or criminal activity," Carroll says. "It can also help identify needs for employee training or the necessity to assist with events such as calving. A simple motion-activated game camera can capture a lot of data. Cameras can be located anywhere on the property where there's regular traffic, animals being transported in or out, or in an area where sick animals can be monitored."

Threats to livestock and property on a farm site may come in the form of a person, wildlife, natural disaster, etc. Video of an incident can assist in unraveling what happened and who/what was involved in the event. There are also camera systems designed to trigger an alert on a telephone application if the camera is activated.

Camera locations don't have to be permanent. During times of intense livestock activity – such as weaning, branding, transporting, breeding – cameras may be moved closer to the action to help capture activity details. Cameras may also be rotated to different sites from time to time.

In selecting an appropriate camera system, considerations include reviewing brands especially designed for use in an agricultural setting, whether footage storage is available or necessary, and whether or not a technician is required to install the system. Some brands are capable of monitoring a wide range of the farm site, which saves on purchase costs.

Wireless camera systems are also an option as well as camera systems designed to carry out a specific action if a threat is detected. Some systems can be set up to use with an SD (secure digital) card and other systems can be powered with a cellular battery that doesn't require use of the internet or electric power.

Some unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) companies offer security features such as aerial illumination, camera zoom functionality and infrared thermal solutions. Depending on the company, the drone can be connected to a security network to provide real-time video.

Keep in mind that new hires may pose a threat to farm site security. Important hiring practices include thoroughly reviewing applicant materials and taking time to at least briefly research applicants using Internet searches and contacting references. Existing employees may be able to recommend potential hires. Implementing strict supervision and/or on-the-job training for new hires over a set period of time can also help reduce potential for security issues.

Once security measures are in place, it's helpful to discuss the security plan and policies with all family members and employees. Signs posted at entrances can help inform visitors about various policies including biosecurity, visitor and no-trespass policy. All family members and employees should have the direct phone number of managers/owners so they can quickly report any security concerns. They should help keep offices and cabinets locked throughout the farm. Additionally, all family members and employees should assist with maintaining and/or increasing lighting around facilities to help deter intruders.

Prior to experiencing a security issue, farmers and ranchers may want to consider developing a relationship with local law enforcement to clarify what resources are available if an incident occurs. Officials can explain how video and other digital resources could be used in an investigation. Providing officials with facility maps and animal locations and inviting them to a scheduled tour of the farm site can help them effectively respond to a call for help.

The practice of maintaining detailed records could provide valuable information if a security incident occurs. Records should include, but not be limited to:

- Video footage or photos
- Annual employee animal care agreements
- Annual employee training documents
- Animal welfare audits or evaluation reports
- Environmental/natural resource compliance records
- Other certificates or awards demonstrating proactive participation in livestock well-being programs

Create a phone, camera or other technology use policy and enforce it. Employees need communication tools around the farm or ranch but ensure that expectations are verbalized and agreed upon by all. If visitors come to the farm, discuss photo use expectations prior to beginning a tour/visit. It may be helpful to designate one or two areas where photos are allowed. Monitor visitor movements to ensure no one deviates from the designated route.

If engagement with angry or aggressive people is required, be polite. If a protest should occur on your property, do not engage with people. Remain calm and immediately call local authorities.

“One way to help maintain security is to be aware of what farm information is available electronically on public platforms and monitor social media pages for potential threats,” Carroll says. “The goal is to remain transparent about the high-quality care animals receive while being raised for food. Not everyone with interest in where their food comes from can physically visit your farm or ranch. Social media platforms can help provide that information.”

Because each farm and ranch site has unique characteristics and needs, an effective security strategy will vary with each individual operation and the tasks they desire to accomplish through use of the equipment. Exploring security options can help identify appropriate equipment for a specific site.

“The Animal Agriculture Alliance offers crisis training, emergency planning and other management resources,” Carroll says. “Reaching out to this organization to ask about security measures will be beneficial. Additional resources and training may also be available from state or local livestock associations.”

The Animal Agriculture Alliance website: <https://animalagalliance.org>.

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