

# “Farm Watch” Program

California producers are victims of more than a tenth of all U.S. farm crimes. The need for added security measures is obvious. The “Farm Watch” program has been designed to meet this demand, by increasing awareness, fostering relationships between neighbors and local law enforcement agencies, and striving to prevent thefts and vandalism of property. The following are suggested ways to begin organizing and implementing a “Farm Watch” program in your area. For more, contact your local Sheriff’s Department.

## **Planning the First Meeting**

- Arrange an informal meeting with a few of your closest neighbors.
- Prepare a meeting agenda, purpose and brief background of the program.
- Invite a law enforcement officer or crime prevention specialist to the meeting.
- If possible, hold the meeting in an informal setting, such as a home.

## **The First Meeting – Assessing Needs, Goals and Participants**

- ◆ Hand out meeting agenda, background information and program forms.
- ◆ Discuss the needs/benefits for a Farm Watch program.
- ◆ Identify rural crime trends/problems.
- ◆ Introduce law enforcement. Discuss coordination efforts and activities with his/her agency. Ask them to provide reports on area crime trends, resource materials and training to residents to assess security, strengths and weaknesses of operations and residences.
- ◆ Select a committee, “Farm Watch” coordinator and block area captains (see guidelines below).

## **Second Meeting – Program Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Coordinator’s Responsibilities:**

- ✓ Serves as a liaison between law enforcement and rural area.
- ✓ Arranges and supervises crime prevention programs. Plans meetings and activities.
- ✓ Facilitates development of crime prevention projects and materials.
- ✓ Maintains a master list of Farm Watch members.

### **Block/Area Captains’ Responsibilities:**

- ✓ Serves as a liaison between residents and coordinator. Assists coordinator in all programs.
- ✓ Recruits new “Farm Watch” members, striving for 100% participation.
- ✓ Makes maps of area of each participant’s property/residence.
- ✓ Notifies residents of meetings and training sessions.
- ✓ Designates work assignments (Secretarial, Patrol, vacation farm/ranch checks, Fund-raising).

### **Committee Participants’ Responsibilities:**

- ✓ Get acquainted with your neighbors, their vehicles and property by sight.
- ✓ Maintain your area map with names, address, and telephone numbers in an accessible location.
- ✓ Regularly attend farm watch meetings. They are for your benefit!
- ✓ Make your home and property as burglar resistant as possible.
- ✓ Mark all of your property for identification by using “O.A.N.” system.
- ✓ Be observant. Report suspicious activities to neighbors or law enforcement when appropriate.
- ✓ Report license numbers and description of suspicious looking persons or vehicles in the area.
- ✓ Educate your children in crime prevention and instill respect for the law.
- ✓ **Do not try to make arrests.** Be a good witness. Notify law enforcement first.

## **Farm Watch Activities and Tools**

### **Patrols**

- Should be organized only after discussions with law enforcement.
- Will more than likely be accomplished by motor vehicle.
- Magnetic car signs are available for designating vehicle patrol.
- Use two-way radios or cell phones to report suspicious activity.
- Should only observe and report and take no direct action.

### **Telephone Network**

- Each participant should be assigned specific neighbors to contact with general information about suspicious circumstances or emergencies.
- Each resident should provide the block/area captain with information about his or her household/property to help make the system effective.

### **Farm Watch Warning Signs**

- Use to warn potential thieves and advise law enforcement.
- 12" x 13" plastic/metal sign are most effective and should be used throughout the property.
- Signs should be mounted on pressure treated 4 x 4 lumber, 12' long. Set 4 feet in the ground.
- Deface the bolts to make them more difficult to remove.

### **Farm Watch Window Warning Decal**

- Place on doors and windows of residence to warn would-be thieves.
- Can be used to identify vehicles or equipment belonging to the particular farm/ranch.

### **Neighborhood/Farm Area Map**

- Use as a guide to report area information to law enforcement, fire, rescue or other emergency personnel.
- Informs residents who their neighbors are.

### **Suspicious Activity Report**

- Provides residents with a uniform guide to record needed information.
- Can be directly passed on law enforcement personnel for use in investigations.