



# It Could Happen to You

**AGRO GUARD**  
 COMMUNITY POLICING PROGRAM  
**WE REPORT ALL SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY**  
 KANSAS BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
 1-800-KS-CRIME  
 LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT  
 EMERGENCY DIAL 9-1-1  
 www.agroguard.org

*Bioterrorism prevention starts with the producer.*

*Story & photos by*  
**ABBY WHITE**

Just as evening chores are finished, you start to head back into the house but notice a car driving slowly along the road. One of the windows rolls down, and someone inside throws something out the window and into your pasture.

A closer look might reveal that it's just a fast-food wrapper, but what if it were someone committing a form of bioterrorism? It could be an attack on our nation's food supply.

Thefts, tampering, perpetrators and vandalism — criminal activity in agriculture — can all lead to a food chain attack.

“One of the best means of prevention is recognition of suspicious activity,” James Lane, Ford County, Kan., undersheriff, says. Lane is a research team member in the National Institute of Justice Agroterrorism Research Project.

“Producers have to be safe, be observant, be seen, be heard, ask questions, close doors, lock gates and

call for help,” Lane says. “Nearly all reported suspicious activity can be explained.”

Lane was a presenter at the International Symposium on Agroterrorism in Kansas City, Mo., Sept. 25-29. He also showed a video narrated by Baxter Black, cowboy poet and veterinarian, which highlighted the potential effects of bioterrorism.

“Security and safety of all major components of the industry is crucial,” Black says in the video. “You have to reach across all facets of agriculture, from farm to fork. If it affects one sector of the industry, it's going to affect other segments. We want to make sure that all stakeholders are involved in planning and prevention — especially prevention.”

### Prevention through Agroguard

Lane says one way producers can help with prevention of bioterrorism is by developing an Agroguard community-policing program. Agroguard reports all suspicious activity and is similar to a neighborhood watch program.

“The goals of Agroguard are to develop the relations between local law enforcement and industry

professionals, to encourage reports of suspicious activity, and to develop sources of intelligence,” Lane explains. “It has to reach across all facets of ag, from farm to fork, because of the interdependence of the industry.”

In Kansas, the Agroguard program is implemented in part by the Kansas Animal Health Department. If someone notices suspicious activity, he or she should call 911 immediately if a crime is in progress. To relay information about a crime that has already occurred, call 1-800-KS-CRIME. The information needed includes your location, what activity is occurring, whether there is a weapon involved, the location of the activity, description and license plate of the vehicle involved, direction of travel, descriptions of persons involved, your contact number and any other information.

### Managing risk

The best way to protect the food supply is to manage risk, Lane says. “The best solution is to have the eyes and ears of the industry linked to aggressive intervention by law enforcement.”

As an industry, the task of being prepared can't be left to the national government or to some agency.

## Look out for agroterrorism

Agroguard lists the following as indicators of agroterrorism.

- Persons having no interest asking specific questions about a facility or processes.
- Unauthorized photography of processes in or around facilities or farms.
- Possession of chemicals, biological agents, vaccines or medication with no logical purpose.
- Possession of manuals, communi-

cations and web sites pertaining to chemicals or biological agents for no logical reason or purpose.

- Attempts to rent or borrow ag-related equipment for no logical reason or purpose.
- Thefts of anhydrous ammonia or other chemicals.
- Thefts of livestock.

For more information about developing an Agroguard program in your area, log on to [www.agroguard.org](http://www.agroguard.org).

“It has to be part of the community — which may be ground zero in an agroterrorism attack,” Lane says.

Local response plans are needed. “With the wide-scale nature of foreign animal disease, state and federal resources may be overwhelmed,” Lane explains.

State plans may require local resources for stop movement, cleaning and disinfecting, quarantine enforcement, public health issues, and responder resources. It involves response, mitigation, education and prevention.

“Ask, ‘Who are the local first responders?’” Lane advises. The list will probably be long. Those involved with local emergency planning could include city and county fire and EMS personnel, the National Guard, police, sheriffs and deputies, highway patrolmen, communication professionals, emergency management workers, public works personnel, Extension educators, public health professionals, animal health professionals and/or those with the National Weather Service. In the industry, local emergency planning involves packers, producers, transporters, feeders, veterinarians and cooperatives.

“We have to be part of a team,” Lane says. “That way we can acquire needed technology and maps, identify housing needs based upon assessments, locate sites for animals based upon gathered data, contact landowners of sites, plot animal housing sites, and coordinate feed and water resources.”

Plans include local law enforcement participating in initial crime scene activities such as the collection of evidence and statements, as well as crime scene security.

“Prevention is intelligence collection and dissemination, which are key factors in interdiction,” Lane says.

### **Collective effort**

It’s obvious a team is needed to prevent a bioterrorism attack.

“It’s our American duty to prevent yet another attack like the World Trade Center,” says Thomas McGinn, director of veterinary and ag security for the Department of Homeland Security. “That also includes our ability to protect our food supply. We have to strengthen our collective effort.”

McGinn says tremendous progress has been made since Sept. 11, 2001, through awareness and hundreds of training sessions. Before Sept. 11, food and agriculture were not even considered a threat, but we still have a long way to go.

For event prevention to be effective, the industry needs intelligence activities, safeguards, vigilance, reports of suspicious activity, and bio- and physical security. Stakeholder planning and rapid response are also needed.

That prevention is needed on a local level, but it is needed globally as well.

“Global food protection requires the shared protection of not only everyone in the U.S., but also other countries,” McGinn explains.

So, who has the primary responsibility of preventing an agroterrorism event?

“We all do, but we have to meet in the middle and build a partnership that will lead to successful intervention,” Lane says.

### **Possible effects**

The potential for economic damage could be the greatest danger, whether considering a naturally occurring disease outbreak or a conventional attack.

Producers should not overlook the power of the psychological nature of an attack, or even the threat of an attack to our food supply. The results would be severe.

“Everyone, from the producer to the consumer must be vigilant in protecting the food that we eat,” Black narrates.

In transit, cattle are more accessible to external influences and are thereby more vulnerable. Any time you get animals

together and close in a confined space, the ability to transmit disease increases. But, for the industry to be efficient, it’s the only way to do things.

“We have been fortunate so far,” Black says. “There have not been any direct attacks to our food supply, but the absence of an attack does not diminish the threat.”

