

## MPs hailed for putting the blowtorch on stock rustlers

6 March 2019 - Federated Farmers - Politicians on both sides of the House get a thumbs-up from rural New Zealanders for passing tougher legislation on rustling this week, Federated Farmers rural security spokesperson Miles Anderson says.

In a unanimous vote yesterday, theft of livestock or any other animal, including beehives and farm dogs, becomes an offence liable for up to seven years in prison. Also passed as part of the Crime Amendment Bill is the offence of unlawful entry on agricultural land with the intent to steal livestock or to act unlawfully against specified things such as buildings or machinery on that land - a crime which could see the offender put behind bars for up to a decade. That's the same penalty as for burglary.

"The case put to MPs by Federated Farmers and others obviously struck a chord," Miles says.

"It's not just about the tens of millions of dollars that livestock rustling costs farming families every year. It's also the distress of finding butchered animals left to die in paddocks, and the dangers involved in farmers having to go out, often on their own and at night, to investigate something suspicious and not knowing whether the stranger/s on their property are carrying weapons."

A Federated Farmers survey in 2016 showed one in four farmers had been hit by stock thieves at least once in the previous five years.

It's not only the potential for longer prison sentences that will act as a deterrent. Because the maximum penalty for the offences exceeds five years, equipment used in the course of the offending - including vehicles used at the time or later purchased from proceeds - will be subject to forfeiture under the Criminal Proceeds (Recovery) Act 2009.

"So that's pretty much everything Federated Farmers sought from the law changes. We thank all MPs - but particularly Kieran McNulty and Andrew Little (Labour) and Ian McKelvie (National) and members of the Primary Production Select Committee - for standing up and being counted on this.

"I think it also underlines how the advocacy work by Federated Farmers - a banner under which all rural New Zealanders can work together - can bring about change and save money for all who work the land to build livelihoods and the primary production that underpins our economy," Miles says.