



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 22, 2019

Contact: Paige Manning, Director of Marketing and Public Relations
(601) 359-1163 / cell: (662) 312-5897
paige@mdac.ms.gov

Ag Theft Investigation Leads to Recovery of Stolen Cattle in Benton County

JACKSON, Miss. — The Mississippi Agricultural and Livestock Theft Bureau (MALTB), the lead agency in a cattle theft investigation, made arrests and recovered cattle stolen from two Benton County farms. The investigation was led by MALTB Investigator Alan Thompson.

“I commend the efforts of the Mississippi Agricultural and Livestock Theft Bureau and the Union County Sheriff’s Office in solving this case, and I am glad the cattle taken were recovered and returned to their rightful owners,” said Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson. “For our cattle farmers and ranchers, their cattle are their livelihood. We aim to make sure modern day cattle rustlers are tracked down, arrested and prosecuted,” Gipson continued.

On October 9, 2019, a Benton County cattleman contacted MALTB, the law enforcement division of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, to report a lock had been cut from his gate and an undetermined number of cattle were stolen from his pasture in the northern area of the county during the night. On October 13, 2019, at least four expensive show cows were stolen from another farm located near Hickory Flat in southern Benton County.

During the course of the investigation, agents with MALTB and Union County Sheriff Jimmy Edwards and sheriff deputies learned the identity of two suspects, which led to an arrest. The suspects were identified, arrested and charged in Benton County. Wyatt Lyn Abbott, age 23, of Myrtle, Miss., and DeJames Bolden, age 24, of Ashland, Miss., were charged with thefts on both farms.

Each suspect posted a \$20,000 bond and has been assigned a court date. Bolden is currently on parole from the Mississippi Department of Corrections for previous charges. The investigation is ongoing to determine if additional suspects were involved in the crimes.

The suspects had no connection or association with the two victims. The cattle appeared to be randomly selected by the suspects. Three of the cows were recovered from a farm in Tennessee, and the other four were recovered from a Union County farm.

The suspects are charged with cattle theft and grand larceny, a felony in Mississippi, and if found guilty will be subject to up to ten years in the custody of Mississippi Department of Corrections and up to a \$10,000 fine. Also, restitution to the victims can be ordered.

MALTB Director, Dean Barnard, praised Investigator Thompson and local law enforcement officials for their dedication to this case. "I appreciate the relentless efforts of Investigator Thompson and the assistance of the Union County Sherriff's Office in investigating this case," said Barnard.

The Mississippi Agricultural and Livestock Theft Bureau enforces state laws pertaining to the theft of cattle, horses, swine, poultry, fish, farm equipment, chemicals, timber and all other farm or agriculture-related crimes. To report or provide information regarding an agricultural crime, call (800) 678-2660.

###