



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

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As we celebrate the 46th annual World Ag Expo, our vibrant agricultural community shines in a worldwide spotlight. Tulare County is the second largest producer of agricultural commodities in the nation. We produce over five billion dollars annually in nut and fruit crops, livestock, and dairy. Every citizen in our county is connected to agriculture in some way. Whether it is as a consumer or as one of the 60 percent of our residents who rely on agriculture for their livelihood, we are all tied to the success of farmers and ranchers. This is why I am committed to fighting agricultural crime and prosecuting criminals who target this critical industry.

Success in the field of agriculture depends on variables such as weather, pest and disease control, and the availability of water. Crime should not be a factor a rancher or farmer must consider as well. However, thefts of farm implements, metal, livestock, and crops are a reality and challenge for our agricultural community. Through funding made possible by the Central Valley Rural Crime Prevention program, we have dedicated staff that efficiently and effectively investigate and prosecute those criminals who prey on our farming community. One of my first priorities as District Attorney was to increase this unit by adding an additional criminal investigator in order to aggressively investigate agricultural crime.

Farmers and ranchers, due to the remote nature of their land, can leave their property and equipment vulnerable to thieves. The Owner Applied Number (OAN) program is administered by our office and it is an outstanding tool to fight crime. By stamping an OAN number on any farm equipment, law enforcement can recover stolen goods and return them to the rightful owner, much like the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) on the dashboard of your car. We offer this service free of charge. We also conduct outreach for farmers, ranchers, and dairy

owners to ensure their unguarded land, crops, animals, and equipment is more resistant to opportunistic criminals.

We work in collaboration with many different government agencies in Tulare County and throughout the state to prevent and prosecute crime. The Tulare County Sheriff's Department is a critical partner in our fight against crime, as is the Board of Supervisors. Recently these two organizations worked together to update an outdated ordinance related to walnut harvesting, which will protect walnut growers from theft. It is this type of collaboration and problem solving that will lead to a reduction in agricultural crime.

Rural crime cannot be tolerated in our community. We have too much to lose to risk letting crime become a variable that must be factored in to the cost of doing business. As your District Attorney, I am committed to combating agricultural crime with technology, man-power, education, and prosecution of criminals.

Tim Ward
District Attorney