UNIZIK Journal of Agricultural Economics and Extension (UJAEE) Vol. 2 No. 1 (2025): 73-77
A Journal of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria
ISSN: 3043-6540 (Print) and 3043-6559 (Electronic) / Available at: https://journals.unizik.edu.ng/ujaee

Effects of Cattle Rustling on Agro-Pastoralists in Danko-Wasagu Local Government Area, Kebbi State, Nigeria

Kabara, A. M.[1]*, Saddiq, I.[2], Ishaya, D. J.[3], Sani, F. A.[4], Sunday, S.[4], and Rabi'u, I.[5]

[1]*Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, Aliko Dangote University of Science and Technology, Wudil.*
[2]*Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.*
[3]*International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) Kano Station, Nigeria.*
[4]*Department of Agriculture Extension and Rural Development, Federal University Dutse.*
[5]*Agricultural Education Department, Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel, Jigawa State, Nigeria*

DOI: *https://www.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18012253*

KEYWORDS:
Agro-pastoralists, Cattle Rustling, Effects, Pastoralists,

***CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:**
kabaramuazzam95@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The general objective of this study was to assess the effects of cattle rustling on agro-pastoralists in Danko-Wasagu LGA, Kebbi State. The study also aims to investigate the losses incurred before and after cattle rustling, and identify intervention mechanisms adopted to address cattle rustling in the study area. The study utilized a multi-stage sampling technique. A sample size of 183 respondents was proportionately drawn from a sampling frame of 3,650 agro-pastoralists. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) to summarize responses and a paired t-test to compare losses before and after cattle rustling attacks. Results indicated that a majority of respondents (95.1%) were engaged in livestock production as their primary occupation. A large proportion of respondents (92.3%) reported that seasonal movement in search of water and pasture was the main factor associated with cattle rustling. Most of the respondents also reported loss of lives (83.1%) and cattle (95.6%) as the greater effect of cattle raiding in their communities. The t-test revealed a significant difference was recorded by the agro-pastoralist before and after cattle rustling. This study recommends that stakeholders establish appropriate reforms on grazing reserves in relation to access to pasture and water. The government should adequately facilitate the security personnel with sufficient equipment, training, and the use of technological advances to boost their capacity to curb cattle rustling.

INTRODUCTION

Cattle rustling in Nigeria has evolved from a traditional practice of livestock raiding into a sophisticated, violent criminal enterprise characterized by the use of advanced firearms and complex logistics (Bassett, 2023). Livestock is a fundamental form of pastoral capital, besides functioning as a means of production, storage, transport, and wealth. Natural resources such as pasture, water, natural vegetation, and livestock were the key drivers of pastoralists' economy, and it is where these communities derive their livelihoods (Titus, 2013). The pastoral economy is intrinsically linked to natural resources such as pasture, water, and vegetation, which are increasingly scarce due to climate variability and land-use changes (Okoli & Lenshie, 2023). However, the declining availability of natural resources has subjected pastoralists to growing hardship and competition. Consequently, some have resorted to aggressive survival strategies such as engaging in cattle rustling as a response to these mounting pressures.

In Nigeria, incidents of cattle rustling have been widespread and violent. In Falgore Forest, Kano State, security forces apprehended seventy-two suspected rustlers and recovered about 818 stolen cattle, along with a cache of weapons, counterfeit security uniforms, and traditional charms allegedly used during operations. Similarly, in Gidan Kaso town of Birnin Magaji Local Government Area, Zamfara State, rustlers reportedly killed forty-two people and destroyed properties valued in millions of naira. By July 2015, the menace had intensified, with about fifty-two residents killed and over one hundred others injured in the Zamfara communities of Chigama and Kokiya, where roughly 1,000 cattle were stolen (Yahaya et al., 2016).

In the Danko-Wasagu Local Government Area of Kebbi State, reports indicate that over 4,000 cattle were stolen in various incidents. Law enforcement agencies confirmed the recovery of 1,048 cattle and 135 small ruminants from 16 reported cases. The special Task Force established to combat cattle rustling also recorded notable success, reclaiming approximately 13,661 cattle, 7,208 sheep, 1,097 goats, 120 camels, 39 donkeys, and two horses. More than 60 communities in Danko-Wasagu were affected by attacks involving armed robbers, rustlers, and kidnappers, leading to the arrest of 17 suspects and the recovery of more than 1,600 animals, including cattle, sheep, goats, and camels (Daily Trust, 2016).

While this study's data from 2017 provides a critical snapshot, the conflict has since evolved. Recent analyses indicate that cattle rustling has transformed into a more sophisticated, commercialized enterprise, often interlinked with wider networks of armed banditry and kidnapping (Maiangwa and Ojo, 2023). This underscores the enduring relevance of understanding its foundational impacts on communities, as documented in this baseline study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Danko-Wasagu Local Government Area is one of the 21 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Kebbi State of Nigeria, with its headquarters in Ribah. The LGA is bordered in the west by Zuru LGA and in the south by Sakaba LGA of Kebbi State, and in the north-east by Bukkuyum LGA of Zamfara State. It's geographically located between Longitude 5^0 - 6^0 E and Latitude 11^0 N of the equator.

The local government Area has three main ethnic groups: Dakarkari, Hausa, and Fulani. Over 80% of the population of the LGA practices one form of agriculture or the other, including livestock production ranging from cows, sheep, goat, and camels. The crops produced include sorghum, maize, beans, cassava, groundnut, rice, and vegetables for cash. Local crafts such as carving, blacksmithing, weaving, and dyeing play an important role in the economic life of the people (Millennium Development Goals, 2012).

The research was carried out in the Danko-Wasagu Local Government Area of Kebbi State. The sampling frame for the research was 3,650 agro-pastoralists, who were drawn from the number of registered members of the agro-pastoralists' association in the study area.

A Multi-stage sampling technique was used for this study. The first stage is the use of a purposive sampling technique based on the presence of high cattle rustling activities, lack of recognition as compared to other affected areas, and convenience in the selection of villages/communities that are frequently affected by the activities of cattle rustlers in the LGA. In the second stage, the proportionate sampling technique was used to select the sample size, and 5% of the agro-pastoralists in each of the selected villages were sampled to obtain a sample size of 183.

The data collected were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis in the form of means, frequencies, and percentages to achieve objectives, while the t-test was used to test the hypothesis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Losses Encountered Before Cattle Rustling in the Study Area

The findings in Table 1 show the losses encountered before cattle rustling on agro-pastoralists. The majority (67.2%) of respondents reported losses valued at ₦251,000–₦500,000 before cattle rustling. Nineteen percent reported losses of ₦48,000–₦250,000; 9.8% reported ₦501,000–₦750,000; 2.8% reported ₦751,000–₦1,000,000; and 1.1% reported ₦1,000,000–₦1,200,000 value of their cattle were rustled.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Based on Losses Encountered Before Cattle Rustling in their Communities (n=183)

Losses before cattle rustling(₦)	Frequency	Percentage
1,000,000 - 1,200,000	2	1.1
751,000 - 1,000,000	5	2.8
501,000 -750,000	18	9.8
48,000 - 250,000	35	19
251,000 - 500,000	123	67.2

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

Losses Encountered After Cattle Rustling in the Study Area

Results in Table 2 revealed that, most (58.4%) of the respondents revealed ₦251,000 - 500,000 value of cattle were rustled, 7.6% of the respondents reported ₦32,000 - 250,000 value of animals/cattle were theft due to cattle rustling activities, 18.1% had revealed #501,000 - 750,000 value of animals were stolen from them, 5.5% believed ₦751,000 - 1,000,000 value of their cattle were raided while 10.4 % of the respondents reported ₦1,000,000 - 5,000,000 value of their cattle were rustled.

The significant economic losses quantified in this study have only been magnified in scale. Recent research characterizes modern rustling as a major drain on the rural economy, with syndicates now operating as sophisticated cartels that cause losses far exceeding those documented here (Egbe and Ushie, 2024). This confirms that the economic threat identified in the 2017 data has escalated.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents Based on Losses Encountered After Cattle Rustling in their Communities (n=183)

Losses after cattle rustling(₦)	Frequency	Percentage
751,000 - 1,000,000	10	5.5
32,000 - 250,000	14	7.6
1,000,000 -5,000,000	19	10.4
501,000 - 750,000	33	18.1
251,000 - 500,000	107	58.4

Source: Field Survey, 2017. ***Note****: This data provides a historical baseline; contemporary research confirms that the economic vulnerability and patterns of loss identified here remain a persistent and escalating issue for agro-pastoral communities (Egbe & Ushie, 2024).*

Mechanisms Adopted in Addressing Cattle Rustling in the Study Area

Table 3 reveals that peace meeting (95.6%), community-based response (91.8%), and civil society response (25.1%). However, the judiciary system (50.8%) and the use of media (94.0%) in addressing cattle rustling were also reported by the respondents.

These results are similar to the findings of (Okoli *et al.,* 2014) who report that local initiatives have been set up in many areas, typically committees that include leaders of both the local government, pastoral and farming groups, and other community leaders. Some of the resolutions made include a schedule for both the herders and farmers, such that allowed the farmers to cultivate their lands in certain months, and other months will be for herders to graze with the provision of a route for them to pass with their livestock. However, where the situation was more serious, they advised authorities concerned to send in the military, which usually set up roadblocks for a few days, and hoped the problem would go away.

The heavy reliance on community-based responses (91.8%) and peace meetings (95.6%) observed in this study remains a cornerstone of local security. Contemporary studies affirm that such local vigilante groups and civilian joint task forces are often the first line of defence in rural Nigeria (Higazi, 2021). However, recent work also cautions that these local mechanisms are often overstretched against well-armed, mobile cartels, highlighting the need for integrated state support (Maiangwa and Ojo, 2023; Okechukwu and Ezeadichie, 2024)

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents Based on Mechanisms Adopted in Addressing Cattle Rustling (n= 183)

Mechanisms	Frequency*	Percentage
Civil society response	46	25.1
Judiciary system	93	50.8
Community-based response	168	91.8
Media	172	94.0
Peace meeting	175	95.6

Multiple response. Source: Field Survey, 2017.* ***Note**: This data provides a historical baseline; contemporary research confirms that the economic vulnerability and patterns of loss identified here remain a persistent and escalating issue for agro-pastoral communities (Higazi, 2021; Maiangwa & Ojo, 2023; Okechukwu and Ezeadichie, 2024).*

Hypothesis Tested on Agro-Pastoralists in the Study Area

The means of the scores of losses encountered by agro-pastoralists before and after cattle rustlers' attack were compared using a paired samples t-test (Table 4). There was a significant difference ($t = -6.510$, df 190, $p<0.05$, two-tailed test) in the means of the scores of losses encountered before cattle rustlers attack ($M = 414360.66$, $SD = 242210.110$) and after cattle rustlers attack ($M = 642251.37$, $SD = 626696.101$). The mean difference = 227890.710; confidence interval = -297348.510 to -158432.911. Looking at the two means, one can confidently say that the mean after cattle rustling attacks was higher than the mean before cattle rustling attacks. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between before and after cattle rustling, is hereby rejected.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents Based on t-test Results Comparing losses Encountered by Agro-Pastoralists before and after Cattle Rustling Attacks in their Communities (n= 183)

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-cal	df	p	Decision
Losses before	183	414360.66	242210.110	-6.474***	182.005		Reject
Cattle rustling	183	642251.37	626696.101				
Losses after Cattle rustling							

*Source: Computed from Survey Data, 2017. Note: **p<.005. Significant level at 5%*

CONCLUSION

Cattle rustling has emerged as a major security challenge in Nigeria, which leads to social consequences for the economic, political, cultural, and psychological spheres of society. At the economic level, it constitutes a major threat to the livelihood of agro-pastoralist who depends on cows for survival.

Based on the findings from this study, it is concluded that most of the respondents believed their movement in search of pasture and water exposed them to the criminals/raiders. It is also concluded that cattle rustling in the study area constitutes a major threat to the day-to-day activities, which leads to loss of lives and farm produce, loss of cattle, and displacement, thereby disturbing peace and unity. The research also concluded that male pastoralists were more prone to or exposed to cattle raiders due to their large herd size as compared to their female counterparts.

This study also reveals that community-based responses (i.e, vigilante groups and civilian JTF) play a vital role in curbing cattle rustling activities. However, this study shows that community-based response is the most effective or preferred intervention mechanism adopted by the participants or respondents in addressing cattle rustling in the study area.

REFERENCES

Bassett, T. J. (2023). The open veins of the Sahel: Political ecology of cattle rustling in West Africa. *African Studies Review*, *66*(1), 45–67.

Daily Trust. (2016, July 14). *Cattle rustling in Northern Nigeria as Governors meet in Kaduna State*. Retrieved September 17, 2016, from http://www.dailytrust.com

Egbe, O. J., & Ushie, V. (2024). The political economy of cattle rustling and armed banditry in Nigeria. *African Security Review*, *33*(1), 21–39.

Higazi, A. (2021). Vigilantism and citizen responses to violence in Nigeria. *African Affairs*, *120*(480), 455–477.

Maiangwa, B., & Ojo, J. S. (2023). From cattle rustling to cartels: The commercialization of violence in Nigeria's North-West. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, *46*(5), 542–562.

Millennium Development Goals. (2012). *Kebbi State Millennium Development Goals Report on Understanding Poverty*.

Okechukwu, E. M., & Ezeadichie, O. M. (2024). Community-led security mechanisms and peacebuilding in Nigeria's Middle Belt. *Contemporary Journal of African Studies*, *10*(1), 45–67.

Okoli, A. C., & Lenshie, N. E. (2023). Climate change, pastoral migration, and resource conflict in the Sahel: The Nigerian experience. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, *58*(1), 95–111.

Okoli, A. C., & Okpaleke, F. N. (2014). Cattle rustling and dialectics in Northern Nigeria. *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science*, *2*(3), 109–116.

Titus, K. (2013). *Effects of cattle rustling on economic development: A case study of Mosol Location, West Pokot County* [Master's thesis, University of Nairobi].

Yahya, A., & Azeez, O. (2016). Cows, bandits and violent conflicts: Understanding cattle rustling in Northern Nigeria. *Africa Spectrum*, *51*(3), 93–105.