



Farm attacks and murders

in South Africa on farms and smallholdings (2025)

Acknowledgement

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Introduction

Since its inception, AfriForum has been at the forefront of the fight against farm murders and farm attacks. The organisation's actions include awareness campaigns that focus on these crimes, legal action in matters that relate to farm attacks, and ongoing efforts to pressure the South African government to classify farm attacks as priority crimes. In addition, AfriForum has established an extensive network of neighbourhood watch groups that comprise specialised volunteers such as reaction teams and trauma volunteers, who respond to farm attacks and crime in general.

This report forms part of this strategy. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of statistics on the farm attacks and farm murders that were committed in 2025¹ as compiled by AfriForum. In addition, the report provides an overview of rural safety regarding farm attacks and farm murders. Farm attacks and farm murders for the 2025 calendar year are outlined, while data that had been collected by AfriForum for the same period was analysed and described.

Although this report is descriptive and focuses on trends, it is important to remember that every crime statistic that is referred to in this report represents the life of a human being – and tragically, in many cases, a person who died.

Theoretical points of departure

1. In this report, AfriForum adopts the same definitions for the terms *farm attacks*, *farms*, and *smallholdings* as defined by the South African Police Service's (SAPS's) *National rural safety strategy* (NRSS) (SAPS 2019: 7).
2. The term *farm attack* (singular) is used throughout this report to refer to a **single incident**, even though this single incident may have involved multiple victims, who may have either survived or died during the attack.
3. The term *murder incident* (singular) refers to a farm attack during which at least one person was murdered.
4. The term *attacker(s)* mainly refers to the person(s) who carried out farm attacks, i.e., who were present at the scene of the crime.
5. The term *suspect(s)* refers to individuals who are suspected of playing a role in carrying out the farm attack, including in a supporting role. The term is mainly used to refer to individuals

¹ Unless otherwise specified, the use of 2024 and 2025 refers to calendar years.

who have been apprehended. It may be that initial reports indicated that two attackers were involved, for example, whereas the SAPS arrested more than two suspects.

6. *Serious, violent act(s) and/or substantial risk of death* refers to acts of severe injury or in which the victim survived, although the violent act could have reasonably resulted in death as a result of injury. Examples of such acts include:
- a firearm is discharged, but the bullet misses the intended victim, or
 - the victim is stabbed or severely assaulted and requires advanced medical intervention to save his/her life.

Instances where it is reported that the victim only sustained **minor injuries** are excluded from this definition.

7. For the purposes of this report, the term *torture* is used only where it was explicitly used to describe a physical act in statements by the victim, the victim's relatives or a mainstream media institution.
8. AfriForum's Community Safety division continuously updates and audits its data on farm attacks and farm murder incidents. It is therefore important to emphasise that the figures in this report may be subject to change in the future when new information about an incident emerges.

Methodology

Data collection and analysis

The information that is included in this report was collected by AfriForum's Community Safety division as well as from various other sources. Sources include AfriForum's Community Safety personnel (including AfriForum's trauma unit), AfriForum's neighbourhood watches, community policing forums report groups, private security companies and consultants, agricultural unions, the media, the SAPS and survivors of farm attacks. However, some details of certain incidents are omitted from this report for security and confidentiality reasons.

This report contains the most current data on farm attacks and farm murders for 2025 that was available to AfriForum's Community Safety division at the time of publishing this report. To promote the accuracy of AfriForum's reports on farm attacks and murders, members of the public are invited to contribute verified or verifiable information on any farm attack or farm murder that is not included in this report by visiting <https://www.plaasmoorde.co.za/meld-n-plaasmoord-aanval-aan/>.

The structure of the report

This report comprises five sections:

1. Farm attacks and murders (2024 to 2025) (pp. 3)
2. Farm attacks and murders that were committed in 2025 (pp. 3–5)
3. Victims of farm attacks and farm murders (pp. 5–6)
4. Crime categories (pp. 6–8)
5. Response by law enforcement and the community (pp. 8–9).

The first section focuses on the number of farm attacks and farm murders that were committed in the 2024 and 2025 calendar years. More detailed information on the farm attacks and farm murders that were committed in the 2025 calendar year is set out in the second section. The third section focuses on the victims of farm attacks and farm murders. The fourth section contains some of the *modi operandi* of the attackers/suspects in the 2025 calendar year. In the fifth section, the response by law enforcement and community safety structures is highlighted.

Farm attacks and murders (2024 and 2025)

AfriForum recorded 184 farm attack incidents and 29 farm murders for 2025. As shown in table 1, the number of farm attacks increased slightly from 176 in 2024 to 184 in 2025. On the other hand, the number of farm murders declined from 37 in 2024 to 29 in 2025.

Although 2025 saw only a slight increase in the number of farm attack incidents that were reported, the actual number is likely to be higher. This might be due to a variety of factors, such as the likelihood of underreporting in certain rural areas where communication with law enforcement agencies is challenging. Furthermore, the definition of a farm attack is differently interpreted by role players. This may result in the inaccurate classification of some farm attacks as other types of crimes. An example of this is that the definition requires an act of violence to classify an incident as a farm attack, but incidents of livestock theft may involve an element of violence (e.g., robbery) yet are reported as purely stock theft.

Table 1: Number of farm attacks and farm murders committed in 2024 and 2025

Calendar year	Farm attacks	Number of murder victims
2024	176	37
2025	184	29

Farm attacks and farm murders that were committed in 2025

Months and frequency

The frequency of incidents varied considerably from week to week: for some weeks only a single attack was recorded, while in other weeks sudden surges occurred. For example, at the beginning of January 2025, four attacks occurred within 48 hours in Gauteng and the North West (Van der Watt, 2025).

The monthly distribution of farm attacks, farm murders and farm murder incidents that were recorded in 2025 is shown in table 2. As can be seen, no month went by without a farm attack being reported. September has the most farm attacks (25), while April has the fewest (five). However, looking at the murder-incident-to-attack ratio, July was the deadliest with a murder-incident-to-attack ratio of 43%, while April was second with a murder-incident-to-attack ratio of 40%. In contrast, December's murder-incident-to-attack ratio was the lowest of all the months, but it also had the second-lowest number of attacks.

Table 2: Number of farm attacks and murder incidents per month (2025)

Month	Farm attacks	Murders	Murder incident	Murder-incident-to-attack ratio
January	24	2	2	8%
February	11	1	1	9%
March	12	1	1	8%
April	5	3	2	40%
May	15	2	2	13%
June	11	1	1	9%
July	14	6	6	43%
August	18	3	3	17%
September	25	3	3	12%
October	22	1	1	5%
November	17	6	6	35%
December	10	0	0	0%

Provinces

A provincial breakdown of farm attacks is presented in table 3, including murders and murder incidents (i.e., attacks that resulted in murder) for 2025. Most farm attacks were reported in Gauteng (50). Mpumalanga had the second-highest reported attacks (26). The Northern Cape experienced the fewest attacks (two).

Regarding farm murders, Gauteng had the highest number of reported murders (seven), followed the Free State. No murders were reported in the Northern Cape and the Eastern Cape. In terms of the murder-incident-to-attack ratio, Limpopo had the highest ratio in 2025 with 31%, indicating farm attacks that occurred in Limpopo tended to result in more murders compared with other provinces. For example, although Mpumalanga had the second-highest number of farm attacks, its murder-incident-to-attack ratio is a mere 4%.

Table 3: Farm attacks and murder incidents per province (2025)

Province	Farm attacks	Murders	Murder incident	Murder-incident-to-attack ratio
Eastern Cape	11	0	0	0%
Free State	17	6	5	29%
Gauteng	50	7	7	14%
KwaZulu-Natal	12	3	3	25%
Limpopo	16	5	5	31%
Mpumalanga	26	1	1	4%
North West	25	4	4	16%
Northern Cape	2	0	0	0%
Western Cape	25	3	3	12%

Victims of farm attacks and farm murders

This section of the report will provide more detail on some victims of farm attacks. At least 300 people were victims of farm attacks – people who experienced direct physical harm, as well as people who were present during the attack. Victims included farmers and farm workers, family members, visitors to farms and smallholdings, and security personnel.

Age of victims of farm attacks and farm murders

Victims of farm attacks that took place in 2025 ranged from children to adults and elderly individuals. **This section only includes farm attack victims whose ages are known** ($n = 112$, or 37% of the total 300 known victims). The figures are depicted in table 4.

8% of these victims were younger than 18 years. One farm attack where children were present is the murder of Jaco Strydom, who was shot dead on his smallholding in front of his family, including children aged six, eight, and twelve (Van Zyl, 2025). In another case, a mother was assaulted on a smallholding near Elandsdrift, where she and her two children – a 12-year-old boy and a nine-year-old girl – were tied up while the attackers looted the house (Olivier, 2025a).

A large percentage of victims were elderly individuals. As can be seen, the age bracket with the highest percentage of victims was that of victims who were between 61 and 70 years old (28%). Alarmingly, 54% of victims were aged 61 years and older. A total of 5% of victims were older than 81 years. One such incident is the murder of 82-year-old Mossie Mostert, whose body was found severely assaulted and tied up after an attack that took place on a smallholding outside Pretoria.

Table 4: Age distribution of victims whose ages are known (n = 112)

Age	Percentage (n = 112)
0 to 18 years	8%
19 to 30 years	12%
31 to 40 years	9%
41 to 50 years	5%
51 to 60 years	12%
61 to 70 years	28%
71 to 80 years	21%
81+ years	5%

Crime categories

Methods by which victims were murdered

Victims were murdered in 15% of incidents that were recorded in 2025.² The methods of murdering victims include firearms and assaults that involve sharp or blunt objects. Incidents involving firearms include the case of 23-year-old farm worker Even Chauke, whose hands and legs were bound, after which he was shot in the stomach (Nduvheni, 2025).

Examples of incidents involving sharp or blunt objects include the murder of farmer Robert Stoltz, whose body was found in a pool of blood with multiple stab wounds, presumably inflicted by a sharp object. A piece of cloth was reportedly found in his mouth, and people who attended the scene described the incident as particularly violent and inhumane (Venter, 2025; Thema, 2025). Likewise, 77-year-old At Mahne was repeatedly beaten with an unknown object outside his farmstead. His wife was tied up and assaulted (Louw-Carstens, 2025a). In some cases, the victims' bodies were discovered without any clear indication of the cause of death. One such case is that of a Limpopo farmer, David Netshilaphala, who was found dead after he had been reported missing after having gone to check on his livestock (Maromo, 2025).

² Please note that one incident can include multiple types of crime. For example, one victim may have been murdered, while another victim may have experienced a serious act of violence during the same incident.

Aggravated violent conduct, rape, and torture

At least 36% of all farm attacks that had occurred in 2025 were classified as “serious violent act[s] and/or substantial risk of death.” Some of these incidents include

- a farm owner in Chrissiesmeer who was stabbed in the neck (Olivier, 2025b)
- Elna and Jan Dhoogte, both of whom were hospitalised, after Jan was shot and Elna grievously assaulted (Schamrel, 2025)
- Dewald Beetge, who spent weeks in the hospital after surviving an “execution-style farm attack” (Aylward, 2026)
- Ciska van Niekerk, who lost her leg after a farm attack (Dibakwane, 2025)
- Johan Roos, who suffered two skull fractures after being hit multiple times with a crowbar (*Stellenbosch Monitor*, 2025)
- Adriaan Vos, who was shot three times (twice in the knee and once in the back), during the incident, while the attackers also burned down his house on the farm (Bolton, 2025).

There were also four recorded incidents of the raping of female victims.

The use of physical torture was reported in 2% of incidents. It was reported that farmer Natie Vos was attacked, tortured, and beaten with a hammer and a golf club on his farm in Limpopo by five attackers (Louw-Carstens, 2025b). In another incident, 70-year-old female farmer Rolé Uys was tied with chains and boiling water was poured over her face (Friedrichs, 2025). One of her farm workers was also burned with boiling water.

Table 5: Types of crime

Type of crime	Percentage of total incidents
Murder	15%
Serious violent act and/or substantial risk of death	36%
Torture	2%

Attackers

At least 553 attackers committed farm attacks in 2025. The number of attackers per incident varies, however. Attackers operated alone, in pairs, or in groups of 3 to 13 people. Based on the available information, single attackers accounted for 13% of the total number of attacks. In contrast, the majority of farm attacks involved groups of attackers. Previous studies indicate that farm attacks are typically carried out in an organised manner (Geldenhuys, 2020; Schwartz, 2025), and 2025 was no exception. When it comes to groups, some are highly organised and display a level of sophistication in their tactics. This includes an awareness of the daily routines

of farmers, residents and workers, as well as the ability to evade authorities after the attack was carried out.³ Other tactics involved luring victims from their homes under false pretences and deliberately setting fire to property as a means of distraction (Van der Merwe, 2025; Blaauw, 2025). In addition, as previously mentioned in an AfriForum report (AfriForum, 2025a), incidents can occur at any hour during the day or night. This pattern continued in 2025. Where items were stolen, electronic items (such as cell phones), cash, firearms, jewellery, other household items and farm equipment formed part of the loot.

Attackers used a range of weapons, including handguns, rifles, knives, pangas and other blunt objects. Vehicles do not seem to be the primary target, since they are often used as getaway vehicles rather than being stolen for their value. There are several cases where vehicles are later found abandoned.

- In at least 45% of the incidents, attackers carried firearms.
- In 10% of incidents, stock theft was involved, with robbery forming part of the attack.
- In 5% of incidents, attackers kidnapped victims.

While most farms and smallholdings were attacked only once in 2025, some were targeted more than once. One farm in Emalahleni's (Witbank's) Bulpan area, for example, was attacked in October as well as November, while four attacks were reported in the Bulpan area over a six-week period (Goldsain, 2025). This may point to a criminal syndicate operating in the area.

Response by law enforcement and the community

In 2025, at least 97 suspects were apprehended in connection with farm attacks. It must be pointed out that such arrests are not always reported to AfriForum's Community Safety division or security consultants, or covered by the media. As a result, the actual number of apprehensions may be different from this figure.

As AfriForum has indicated on many occasions, continued cooperation between the SAPS, private security and community structures is essential in combating farm attacks. Throughout 2025, there were several instances in which private security and community involvement were vital to the eventual arrest of suspects of farm attacks. Successful cooperation is demonstrated in a murder case in Limpopo, where information provided by farmers to the SAPS's investigative team was acted upon and ultimately led to the arrest of a suspect (Maromo, 2025). In another case, following an attack on a couple on their smallholding near

³ Multiple conversations with AfriForum neighbourhood watch members and farm attack experts.

Brits, the SAPS, supported by AfriForum neighbourhood watch members and private security, located the suspects who had been involved in the attack. This led to a shootout between the suspects and the SAPS, in which one suspect was fatally wounded and two others were arrested (*Kormorant*, 2025).

Conclusion

In a nutshell, there was a decrease in the number of reported farm murders, which is cause for optimism. Nevertheless, there was a small increase in the number of incidents, and there is real cause for concern that this may continue for the foreseeable future. For example, although livestock theft was only reported in 10% of farm attack incidents as AfriForum has highlighted, stock theft remains a widespread and serious problem in South Africa, inflicting direct losses of at least R200 million for the agricultural sector in just one quarter of 2025. Given the scale and prevalence of stock theft, it is reasonable to suspect that some incidents involving stock theft could escalate into violent farm attacks (AfriForum, 2025b). In addition, 36% of incidents involved a serious violent act and/or a substantial risk of death. This figure reflects only those incidents where sufficient information was available to draw such a conclusion, and this figure may therefore be higher. This supports the view that violence in rural areas is a real concern.

Regarding frequency and provincial distribution, on average, there were 3,5 farm attacks per week in 2025. Given that attacks occurred in all provinces, it illustrates that farm attacks are a national crime phenomenon and highlights the ongoing vulnerability of the rural community. In 2025, AfriForum petitioned to have farm attacks classified as a national priority crime.

Regrettably, this request was not granted by the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI). Nevertheless, AfriForum will continue in this endeavour. While the DPCI's decision is unfortunate, AfriForum is committed to improving its relationship with the SAPS. Indeed, over the past year, the relationship with national rural safety has borne fruit. Moreover, AfriForum remains committed to expanding and strengthening its community safety structures.

Based on this report, the following recommendations are made:

1. Because of the high degree of violence that is associated with farm attacks, AfriForum neighbourhood watch groups should expand the training of their trauma support volunteers.
2. Relationships with external stakeholders must be maintained and strengthened to facilitate better information sharing and to identify emerging trends.
3. A detailed analysis of the methods of operation (*modi operandi*) of farm attackers must be conducted.

4. Given the widespread geographic spread and ongoing frequency of incidents, attacks on farms and smallholdings should be classified as a priority crime.

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