



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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MALTB Recovers Stolen Ag Equipment in Separate Investigations on Same Day *Investigators Recover Equipment, Make Arrest in Hinds & Jefferson Counties*

JACKSON, Miss. – This week, the Mississippi Agriculture and Livestock Theft Bureau (MALTB) assisted in the recovery of stolen agricultural equipment from two separate investigations. The recovered skid steer, valued at \$135,000, was stolen from Hinds County and a truck and tractor with attachments, valued at a combined \$113,000, were all stolen from a farm in Lincoln County.

The Hinds County Sheriff's Office took the initial report of a stolen 2021 Kubota SVL97-2 skid steer Tuesday, September 24, 2024. On this same date, MALTB was asked to assist in the investigation of the theft. The skid steer was reportedly being used to clear timber off right aways near Hwy 27 in Utica. The equipment was quickly located and recovered in a wooded area in rural Hinds County.

“The stolen skid steer in this case was located with the help of a concerned citizen making an anonymous call to the Mississippi Agriculture and Livestock Theft Bureau,” said MALTB Director Dean Barnard. “Calls like these help law enforcement officers combat crime in our communities and across our state. So, we want to encourage the public: if you see something, say something.”

“I want to thank our MALTB investigators and the Hinds County Sheriff's Office for their swift response and diligence in this case,” continued Barnard.

On that same day, September 24, MALTB investigators assisted in the recovery of equipment in another case, and the subsequent arrest of a suspect. The crime, which included the theft of a 2022 white Ford F350 dually truck, 22-foot trailer and Mahindra 5145L tractor with a front-end loader and Titan rotary cutter attached, was first reported to the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office on March 11, 2024. The truck and trailer, with the loaded tractor and rotary cutter, had been parked at a farm in Lincoln County when the landowners returned home and discovered the equipment stolen.

MALTB investigators uncovered a suspect who may have been in possession of the stolen farm equipment. On August 25, 2024, MALTB notified the Clinton Police Department of the stolen truck possibly inside the city limits of Clinton. That same day, officers with the Clinton Police Department located the truck pulling a horse trailer on I-20 east bound and conducted a traffic stop on the Ford F350 truck for traffic violations, improper tag on the truck and expired tag on the horse trailer.

The driver of the truck was identified as Darion Fells. Fells was arrested for possession of stolen property, receiving stolen property, possession of an altered VIN on a motor vehicle in violation of Mississippi Chop Shop Law and several traffic offenses. Fells was transported to the Clinton Police Department without incident where he had an initial appearance and bonded from the Clinton Jail.

The Mississippi Agriculture and Livestock Theft Bureau continued to investigate this case and on September 24, 2024, located and recovered the stolen Mahindra 5145L tractor in Fayette, Mississippi.

Director Dean Barnard would like to commend all the MALTB investigators involved, along with the Fayette Police Department, Clinton Police Department and Lincoln County Sheriff's Office, for their continued efforts and assistance in the recovery of these stolen agricultural assets. This is an open and ongoing investigation with more arrests forthcoming.

The Mississippi Agriculture and Livestock Theft Bureau, the law enforcement division of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, 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. Visit <http://msagtheft.org/> to learn more about the MALTB. To report or provide information regarding an agricultural crime, call (800) 678-2660.

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Photos attached.



This week, the Mississippi Agriculture and Livestock Theft Bureau assisted in the recovery of a stolen 2021 Kubota SVL97-2 skid steer, valued at \$135,000, in Hinds County.



The Mississippi Agriculture and Livestock Theft Bureau assisted in the recovery of a stolen 2022 Ford F350 dually truck and Mahindra 5145L tractor with a front-end loader and Titan rotary cutter attached in Hinds and Jefferson Counties. The equipment, valued at a combined \$113,000, was originally stolen from a farm in Lincoln County.



In conjunction with the Lincoln County theft, Darion Fells was arrested for possession of stolen property, receiving stolen property, possession of an altered VIN on a motor vehicle in violation of Mississippi Chop Shop Law and several traffic offenses.