



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

ANDY GIPSON  
COMMISSIONER

# **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 2, 2022**

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## **Ag Theft Investigation Leads to Recovery of Stolen Property in Yalobusha and Panola Counties**

**JACKSON, Miss.** – On Wednesday, October 26, agents with the Mississippi Agriculture and Livestock Theft Bureau (MALTB) and the Panola County Sheriff's Department executed search warrants at two properties, simultaneously. Authorities recovered several dual axle utility trailers, a horse trailer, two (2) boats with missing VIN plates, a 500-gallon fuel tank, saddles, cement mixer, night vision scope, cameras and numerous other valuable items stolen from a farm in Yalobusha County and a timber operation in Panola County.

"I commend Director Dean Barnard, Ag Theft investigators and the Panola County Sheriff's Department for their efforts in this ongoing investigation. Farmers rely on equipment daily as part of their livelihoods. We aim to protect and serve our agricultural community, and we look forward to bringing the culprits to justice," said Mississippi Agriculture and Commerce Commissioner Andy Gipson.

This is an ongoing investigation of farm and logging business-related theft involving property valued into the thousands of dollars. To date, one arrest has been made in connection with the operation. Christopher Lamar Morris, age 32, of Batesville, Miss., has been charged with Grand Larceny in Panola County.

It appears conspirators were attempting to possibly place the items on eBay and Facebook marketplace and black-market avenues for sale. Agents and deputies expect additional arrests and charges to be coming against Morris and others that have been identified as involved, but not yet arrested. According to agents and deputies, once they go through the inventory of stolen items, they will attempt to reach out to any other owners as the case moves forward.

Mississippi Ag Theft Director Barnard praised MALTB agents and the Panola County Sheriff's Department for their assistance in this ongoing investigation.

The Mississippi Agricultural and Livestock Theft Bureau, a 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 [www.mdac.ms.gov/bureaus-departments/agricultural-livestock-theft-bureau/](http://www.mdac.ms.gov/bureaus-departments/agricultural-livestock-theft-bureau/) to learn more about the MALTB. To report or provide information regarding an agricultural crime, call (800) 678-2660.

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**Photos and cutline attached.**

**Cutline: Agents with the Mississippi Agriculture and Livestock Theft Bureau (MALTB) and the Panola County Sheriff's Department executed search warrants at two properties recovering several dual axle utility trailers, a horse trailer, two boats with missing VIN plates, a 500-gallon fuel tank, saddles, cement mixer, night vision scope, cameras and numerous other valuable items stolen from a farm in Yalobusha County and a timber operation in Panola County.**





