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Border security to include livestock inspectors

By Kevin Buey For the Sun-News

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DEMING -- Livestock scale inspection begins July 26, in New Mexico, by New Mexico Department of Agriculture inspectors certifying scales.

Given concern about border safety, inspectors in the Luna, Hidalgo and Grant County areas will be escorted by sheriff's deputies.

Area members of the New Mexico Cattlegrowers Association met Wednesday night at La Fonda Restaurant to discuss concerns.

"They are no less safe this year than last year, but the murder of Robert Krentz has brought it more into focus," said Caren Cowan, association executive director, said of the inspectors.

Krentz was shot to death on his Arizona ranch, near the New Mexico border, in March. Footprints from the scene led to the Mexican border.

There are 30 or more scales in the corridor -- south of Interstate 10 from Las Cruces to the Arizona border.

"There have been no instances (of problems)," said Joe Gomez, division director of NMDA Standards and Consumer Services. "We're just taking a proactive attack."

The NMDA wanted to do this last year, he said, but

the U.S. Border Patrol was unable to accommodate inspectors due to its workload.

This year, law enforcement will be there.

Through the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security, law enforcement in the border area receives Operation Stonegarden money, partnering law enforcement with Border Patrol.

"We're working with the Livestock Board and where they're using people to certify scales for shipping cattle, we'll be sending deputies so

they can concentrate on their work instead of worrying about security," Luna County Sheriff Raymond Cobos said.

Deputies work overtime paid through the Stonegarden program, so they won't be taken from regular patrols to escort inspectors.

"It'll be good for deputies to get an idea of where these operations are. A lot of these are areas where we don't normally patrol," Cobos said.

Cobos will be liaison/coordinator with the Hidalgo and Grant County sheriff's offices and the inspectors on this program.

Requests for scale certification must be made to the NMDA.

The NMDA has already met with cattlegrowers in the state's Northwest (Cuba) and Northeast (Roy) areas and will be in the Southeast (Portales) in about two weeks.

Kevin Buey writes for the Deming Headlight, a

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member of the Texas-New Mexico Newspapers Partnership, and can be reached at kbuey@demingheadlight.com.

Requests for scale inspection

- Letters may be mailed to N.M. Department of Agriculture, Standards and Consumer Services, MSC 3170, P.O. Box 30005, Las Cruces, N.M. 88003-8005.
- Faxes may be sent to (575) 646-2361, attention Corina Acosta.
- Requests may be done online. A 2010 Livestock Scale Inspection Request Form is available at <http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu>
- Request period: June 1 to July 16. Requests received after July 16 will not be honored.

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