



Life for Border Ranchers: Assaulted, Dogs Beaten, Fences Destroyed, Dead Bodies

Description

USA: EAGLE PASS, Texas—Ranchers along the south Texas border are having their livelihoods crushed by the volume of illegal aliens trampling through their properties, assaulting and threatening them, beating their dogs, cutting fences, destroying water lines, and breaking into their homes.

Some have moved their families off the property for safety and ranch managers are quitting their jobs.

One rancher has found 17 dead bodies on his property this year, and on three occasions he had his young children with him.

“How am I supposed to explain to a young child what a dead body is doing there, rotting, just laying there?” rancher and wildlife biologist Ben Binnion said in front of the Texas Senate Committee on Border Security in Eagle Pass, Texas, on Aug. 10.

“My kids shouldn’t have to see that, especially on private property.”

Binnion manages about 150,000 acres of ranchland, which is mainly used for recreation hunting, 10 miles off the U.S.–Mexico border.



South Texas border region highlighting Maverick and Kinney counties, which share an international boundary with Mexico. (The Epoch Times)

Nine years ago, when he first moved to the Maverick County ranch, he said Border Patrol apprehended 37 illegal aliens on his property during the year. Right now, he sees an average of 200 illegal aliens per night on the cameras he's personally set up.

"They're absolutely trashing our fences," Binnion said. "??I had to hire a full time employee who spends 40 hours a week fixing fences and picking up trash. And that's literally all he does."

He said he's added security cameras and installed hurricane shutters on the ranch houses to prevent break-ins.

"The houses that are not secure, we have to leave unlocked because they break the windows to get in. Those houses are broken into at least once a week," he said.

"I've actually moved my wife and kids off the ranch due to safety reasons. I don't want to put them in that danger."

Binnion said the financial loss is tough to estimate, but he's looking at about \$300,000 so far this year from patching the damage being done.

"And that is simply putting a bandaid on a bullet hole. That has nothing to do with replacing anything. If

we were to replace everything it'd be \$800,000 plus," he said.

"We're actually looking at hiring additional security for hunting season so our guests feel safer."

Maverick County shares 88 miles of international border with Mexico, which is divided by the winding Rio Grande. It has one of the highest rates of "gotaways"—up to 10,000 per month—of all 31 counties that border Mexico. Gotaways are recorded by Border Patrol as having been detected, but not apprehended.

The illegal alien gotaways traversing this region are trying to evade law enforcement because they are either criminals, previously deported, or they know they won't gain legal entry.

Such was the case with a Colombian man being smuggled in a vehicle headed to San Antonio after he entered through Maverick County. The man, along with five other illegal aliens were stopped in Kinney County and apprehended. Once Border Patrol took the six into custody, agents discovered the Colombian is wanted for child sex offenses in the United States.



Ranchers from south Texas testify during a Texas Senate field hearing on border security in Eagle Pass, Texas, on Aug. 10, 2022. (Charlotte Cuthbertson/The Epoch Times)

‘Completely Insane’

The border ranchers rarely call Border Patrol for help anymore. Agents are usually too tied up processing large groups of illegal aliens to respond. The ranchers' main lifeline now are Texas state troopers, who Gov. Greg Abbott has deployed to border areas to provide some relief from the unending streams of traffic surging across the border.

Christopher Roswell's family has owned property in Maverick County for several generations and he's lived there for 26 years.

"What I've witnessed over the last two years has been completely insane. Safety has become a major concern. My wife, my kids, our employees, and myself carry a pistol everywhere we go on the ranch," he said during the hearing at Eagle Pass.

"We have been cussed at, threatened, had rocks and sticks thrown at us. Our dogs have been beaten on multiple occasions by illegals. In the past, we have not had these issues."

Roswell recently moved his family off the ranch due to safety fears.

As with many ranchers in this area of south Texas, Roswell's main income is recreational hunting. Exotic or native game is a prized catch for some hunters and they'll pay tens of thousands of dollars to get a shot at a home-grown trophy.

That means ranchers rely on their high game fences to keep stock on their ranch and particularly off any highways, where they'd be liable if an animal escaped and caused injury.

Roswell said his fence by the main highway has been "completely ruined" from being cut and driven through countless times.

"Every hunting camp I have has been vandalized. Our headquarters have been broken into. Over half of our highway gates have been run through. We've had three electric gates destroyed. Most of my hunting blinds have been vandalized, windows and doors broken, one set on fire, several used as bathrooms," Roswell said. All of the illegal aliens carry knives and travel in groups.

"For the first time, I've received phone calls asking if it's safe to come hunt. We've had countless hunts ruined by illegals. Our hunters have been threatened by illegals. My livelihood is being threatened.

"It's not just the damages that we have to deal with, it's also the abuses of the human trafficking. In the last year, we have found six dead illegals that I'm aware of. I have helped women and men who have been beaten, raped, and abandoned by their groups.

"This past winter, we found a little girl, she was 8 years old. She had been lost for three days all by herself because her group left her."

Roswell urges people to think about the same thing happening to their own property and their own backyards and gardens.

"And then imagine your kids or your grandkids playing in those yards. Because that's what we're living through every single week," he said.

"We've had our ranch truck stolen. The amount of trash on the property is completely disgusting. We have tons and tons of backpacks and bottles and trash bags. Probably about 200,000 gallons of fresh water has just been wasted and poured out onto the ground.

“All of these damages in two years time have added up to a little over \$200,000. And that’s without us building any new fence. Why should I incur this cost?”



Law enforcement and EMS respond to a vehicle smuggling crash in Kinney County, Texas, on June 29, 2022. (Kinney County Sheriff’s Office)

Organics on Hold

Ruben Garibay bought some land and moved to Maverick County to start an organic farming operation. In 2019 he started clearing and preparing the land for his crops.

But at the beginning of 2021, when he was ready to get things underway, the border crisis hit and he couldn’t plant anything.

“We have yet to be able to start it because of all the trampling already in the fields. As some of you may know, in organic farming, any kind of contamination deems the crop completely useless and you’ve got to destroy it within a 10-foot radius of any footprint, animal, anything that comes in,” he said.

“So although we have high fences—not to keep exotic game in, but to keep any kind of traffic or animals out—they’re still jumping them.”

Garibay said he tried to place ladders for illegal aliens to climb his fences without ruining them, or to direct them to walk along the equipment pathways, but to no avail.

He has no choice but to wait and hope things will change.

"It's pretty discouraging," he said.

'Fear Factor'

Wayne King spends four and a half hours every day checking fences on the exotic game ranch he manages in Kinney County. Prior to January 2021, he said he checked the fences once a week or maybe once every two weeks.

"Since then I have fixed 252 holes in my fence. I fixed water troughs, I fixed water lines. They come through our place like it's a highway. I have been woke up at night at 11 p.m., 12 a.m., 1 o'clock in the morning with them banging all over my doors, my windows. I've had to use my pistol to run them off," he said.

"It's become a dangerous, dangerous thing to live every night of your life wondering. I sleep with pistols under my pillow, pistols in every room. Pistols on my nightstand. It's just crazy."

King is located 25 miles from the nearest town: "911 doesn't help me a bit."

He said illegal aliens have cut his fences wide enough to drive vehicles through. His gates have been destroyed and left open. He estimates he's lost in revenue between \$150,000 and \$200,000 worth of exotic game.

"It's just getting to the point where if it was not for ... our highway patrol agency, we might as well give up. We're done," he said.

"To live every day of your life in fear. Not accounting the work that's lost or the work we have to do, it's the fear factor of being in the pasture."



A Border Patrol agent picks up three illegal aliens after Texas state troopers arrested two U.S. citizen smugglers who were transporting them to San Antonio, in Kinney County, Texas, on Oct. 20, 2021. (Charlotte Cuthbertson/The Epoch Times)

Cows on Highway

Rancher Luis Valderrama was a Border Patrol agent for 24 years and a criminal investigator with Customs and Border Protection for another 10.

“I’ve been around a long time, I’ve seen these immigration influxes up and down. This is very unique, what we’re going through right now, with the number of aliens coming through,” he said. “Border Patrol, their hands are tied.”

Valderrama said he’s grateful for the extra state troopers and National Guardsmen in the area.

The National Guard initially put some concertina wire along the riverbank to deter illegal crossings.

“The first day they put it up there. I got up on the river and I was watching a group crossing, because they cross all the time,” Valderrama said. “They just jumped over like a deer—it didn’t slow them down at all.”

The National Guard is now erecting an 8-foot high cyclone fence topped with razor wire along the river boundary.

“We’ll see how that works. The properties next to me don’t have a fence, so I’m going to still have some traffic through it,” he said.

Valderrama's fence along the highway boundary is even more critical as he has 50 head of cattle to contain. The fence is cut often.

"And these holes are huge. People just walk by without having to dip their head. A cow easily gets out and I've had cows get out on the highway."

The fence has been damaged so much, Valderrama got an estimate for a replacement. It came to \$70,000 and would be cut again the next day, so it doesn't make sense to do it.

"We can't just stand back and watch this stuff. Federal government needs to stand up and do their business. And Border Patrol can do the business you know they do have the manpower and all that but they're not allowed to do it."

All of the ranchers said they have to be careful about giving illegal aliens water or to allow them to charge their cell phones.

"If you give them anything, you're gonna have the world show up," Binnion said. Because they'll drop a GPS pin on the smartphone map for that location and send it back to Mexico for the next group to use. And the next one after that.

by Charlotte Cuthbertson

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