

717A.3 Crops or crop operation property damage — civil action — criminal penalties.

1. A person shall not, without the consent of the owner, do any of the following:

a. Willfully destroy or damage a crop maintained on crop operation property or crop operation property.

b. Exercise control over a crop maintained on crop operation property or crop operation property with an intent to deprive the owner of the crop or crop operation property.

c. Enter onto or remain on crop operation property if the person has notice that the property is not open to the public, and the person has an intent to do one of the following:

(1) Disrupt agricultural production conducted on the crop operation property if the agricultural production directly relates to the maintenance of crops. A person is presumed to intend disruption if the person moves, removes, or defaces any sign posted on the crop operation property or label used by the owner and the sign or label identifies a crop maintained on the crop operation property.

(2) Destroy or damage a crop or any portion of a crop maintained on the crop operation property.

A person has notice that a crop operation property is not open to the public if the person is provided notice prohibiting entry before the person enters onto the crop operation property, or the person refuses to immediately depart from the crop operation property after being notified to leave. The notice may be in the form of a written or verbal communication by the owner, a fence or other enclosure designed to exclude intruders, or a sign posted which is reasonably likely to come to the attention of an intruder and which indicates that entry is prohibited.

2. a. A person suffering damages resulting from an act which is in violation of this section may bring an action in the district court against the person causing the damage to recover all of the following:

(1) For damages that are not to a research crop, an amount equaling three times all actual and consequential losses.

(2) For damages to a research crop, all of the following:

(a) Twice the amount of damages directly incurred by market losses, based on the lost market value of the research crop due to the damage, assuming that the research crop would have matured undamaged and been sold in normal commercial channels. If the research crop has no market value, the damages shall be twice the amount of actual damages incurred in producing, harvesting, and storing the damaged research crop.

(b) Twice the amount of damages directly incurred by developmental losses, based on the losses associated with the research crop's expected scientific value. The research crop's scientific value shall be determined by calculating the amount expended in developing the research crop, including costs associated with researching, testing, breeding, or engineering. However, such damages shall not be awarded to the extent that the losses are mitigated by undamaged research crops that have been identically developed.

b. A prevailing plaintiff in an action brought under this section shall be awarded court costs and reasonable attorney fees, which shall be taxed as part of the costs of the action.

3. A person who violates this section as it applies to a research crop or crop operation property where a research crop is maintained is guilty of the following:

a. For a violation of subsection 1, paragraph "a", the person is guilty of criminal mischief as provided in section 716.1, and commits the same class of offense as provided in sections 716.3 through 716.6 based on the amount of damage to the research crop or crop operation property where the research crop is maintained.

b. For a violation of subsection 1, paragraph "b", the person is guilty of a class "D" felony.

c. For a violation of subsection 1, paragraph "c", the person is guilty of an aggravated misdemeanor.

4. A person who violates this section as it applies to a crop other than a research crop or crop operation property where a research crop is not maintained is guilty of the following:

a. For a violation of subsection 1, paragraph "a", the person is guilty of criminal mischief as provided in section 716.1, and commits the same class of offense as provided in sections 716.3 through 716.6 based on the amount of damage to the crop or crop operation property where the crop is maintained.

b. For a violation of subsection 1, paragraph “*b*”, the person is guilty of an aggravated misdemeanor.

c. For a violation of subsection 1, paragraph “*c*”, the person is guilty of a serious misdemeanor.

5. *a.* This section does not prohibit any conduct of a person holding a legal interest in a crop operation that is superior to the interest held by a person suffering from damages resulting from the conduct.

b. This section does not apply to a governmental agency that is taking lawful action against a crop or crop operation property.

2001 Acts, ch 120, §6