

4 die as herdsmen clash with villagers

From Sadeeq Aliyu, Gusau

FOUR persons have been reported dead following a clash between Fulani herdsmen and the people of Mada village in Tsafe Local Government Area of Zamfara State.

Our correspondent gathered that trouble started Saturday when 20 herdsmen with over 1,500 herds of cattle were crossing the village when one of the cows plucked some corn from the fence of a household. It was said that the wife of the house owner came out to chase the cow but one of the Fulanis allegedly macheted her on the head, inflicting a deep cut on her.

Witnesses said when her husband and his neighbour confronted them, they instantly killed them with machetes and

drove away their cattle. When the police were alerted, they pursued the herdsmen into the bush with the aim of arresting them, but they resisted by attacking the police with bows and arrows. According to the state Commissioner of Police Mohammed J. Abubakar, "Our men refused to retaliate with fire but they showered them with several canisters of tear gas as a result of which they ran and abandoned their cattle". He said because of the intensity of the tear gas, the cows also scattered into bush but the herdsmen regrouped and started shooting with their locally made guns and that resulted into an exchange of gunfire between them and the police which lasted for over two hours, and two herdsmen men were shot dead.

The Police Commissioner said

five of the Fulanis were arrested and his men had so far brought to Gusau, about 500 cows and a number of camels and rams abandoned by the Fulanis after the gun duel.

In the meantime, it was gathered that the herdsmen who were identified as Nigerians, had hijacked several cattle along their way before reaching Mada village where the incident occurred. However, following the arrest of the cattle by police, many cattle owners in the nearby villages went to the Gusau Trade Fair ground where the animals were gathered and identified their own. The animals were however not released to them until after investigation by the police.

The Police Commissioner said the situation had been contained and security had been beefed up.