

Loxahatchee animal cruelty bust largest in U.S. history

Slaughterhouse owners, employees accused of torturing animals, selling meat on black market



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LOXAHATCHEE, Fla. -

Authorities in Palm Beach County raided three illegal slaughterhouses Tuesday morning in Loxahatchee with the help of officials with the Animal Recovery Mission.

The operation resulted in the arrests of six slaughterhouse owners and employees. About 1,000 animals were found alive by rescuers.

Authorities said the owners were involved in the underground and illegal slaughter of horses and illegal sale of their meat for human consumption, and said the meat was sold from Palm Beach County to Miami.

Tuesday's raid was the largest tactical strike on extreme animal cruelty operations in U.S. history.

One of the owners was identified as Jorge Garcia, who runs **Rancho Garcia, 15703 Orange Blvd**. Authorities said Garcia's customers have been traveling to Loxahatchee from the Miami area for decades and said Garcia purchases his horses from animal auctions and Craigslist.

Garcia is also accused of selling the animals for black magic and sacrificial purposes.

Authorities said undercover ARM investigators witnessed and captured footage of Garcia and his employees "selling large amounts of horse meat, violently stabbing pigs in the heart and boiling them alive, slitting throats of goats and rams before hoisting them by their hind legs then skinning them alive, and brutally stomping on ducks, slitting their throats and drowning them in their own blood."

Garcia also used a section of his farm to run a puppy mill, where he breeds and sells dogs, authorities said.

Garcia was arrested on two charges of causing cruel death to conservation animals and two counts of torment, deprivation, mutilation or killing of conservation animals. His bond was set at \$6,000.

In addition, Rafael Ramirez was arrested in connection with the Rancho Garcia raid. He is charged with the selling, buying and possession of horsemeat without a stamp, causing cruel death to conservation animals and torment, deprivation, mutilation or killing of conservation animals. His bond was set at \$9,000.

G.A. Paso Fino, 14873 Collecting Canal Road was also raided and shut down Tuesday.

Authorities said the property is used for the training, breeding and selling of horses for slaughter, and is owned by Orlando Guzman.

Guzman rents part of the land in the back of the property to Edgar Sr. Bica and Edgar Jr. Bica, who are also accused of running an illegal slaughterhouse.

ARM investigators said the men supplied horse meat on the black market in the Loxahatchee and greater Wellington areas for decades, and tortured and slaughtered chickens, pigs and goats.

Investigators said the men killed the animals the same way as Garcia and said they would also throw live armadillos into boiling water.

Investigators said a puppy mill was being operated on the site, and the dogs were contained in small cages "riddled with excrement and rust and no water available."

Cock fighting roosters were also discovered on the property.

Edgar Bica Sr. and Edgar Bica Jr. were both charged with causing cruel death to conservation animals and torment, deprivation, mutilation or killing of conservation animals. Their bonds were both set at \$3,000 each.

Records on Guzman have not yet been released.

The final slaughterhouse raided Tuesday was **Medina Farm, 2151 C. Road.**

Authorities said the farm is legally incorporated, but claim the owner Jay and his employee, Jose Reyes, have been illegally slaughtering and torturing animals on their farm for decades.

Reyes was arrested and charged with causing cruel death to conservation animals, threatening to kill or harm horses or cattle and torment, deprivation, mutilation or killing of conservation animals. His bond was set at \$11,000.

"ARM investigators have witnessed and documented extreme acts of animal cruelty such as, slitting goat's necks while they are restrained on their backs, forced to suffocate in their own blood, as well as slitting and severing the throats of cows with extremely dull blades before hoisting them by their hind legs and skinning them alive, often dragging out their death for over 20 minutes," authorities said.

Medina Farm's customers largely consisted of Muslims "who bought animals to be slaughtered for human consumption and ritualistic sacrifice," authorities said.

Reports also show that a man named Monieram Rathibhan, 58, was arrested Tuesday and charged with causing cruel death to conservation animals, threatening to kill or harm horses or cattle and torment, deprivation, mutilation or killing of conservation animals. His bond was set at \$9,000.

Authorities said approximately 750 animals were seized, including goats, pigs, cattle, numerous species of birds, dogs, cats and fighting roosters.