

Man Takes Plea Deal in Southwest Miami-Dade Slaughterhouse Case

By [Gilma Avalos](#)

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A man was sentenced to 364 days in jail Tuesday after accepting a plea deal for his role operating what authorities said was an illegal slaughterhouse in southwest Miami-Dade. NBC 6's Gilma Avalos reports.

PHOTOS AND VIDEOS



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Jesus Navarro, 52, was one of four men arrested last summer. Investigators said they were responsible for torturing and brutally slaughtering animals for meat for the last several decades.

"It's a good day for ARM operatives and really the state of Florida, taking a pretty violent individual for animals off the streets," said Richard Couto of the Animal Recovery Mission. "Someone who butchers animals alive, is a known horse killer."

While the slaughterhouse had been operating for decades, according to investigators, VIP Animal Sales was shut down in June following a multi-agency, eight-month undercover investigation. Dozens of animals were rescued. ARM recorded video of what it said were the inhumane and unsanitary practices taking place on the property.

"The purpose of this was basically for meat for human consumption. So, you're looking at an extremely dirty environment with a great deal of meat being produced out of and going into the food chain," Couto said last summer.

Navarro's attorney, though, said his client accepted a plea deal to avoid the possibility of serving five years behind bars for doing a job his client was asked to do.

"He received money for it. And he wasn't trying to cheat anyone, or do anything illegal," his attorney Eric Cvelbar said. "He just acted in the way that he knew how to act – basically how to kill, slaughter animals. The way he was trained."

Investigators also arrested Andre Pablo Martinez, Daniel Lombana and Juan Bazan, who all face charges of felony animal cruelty.

Navarro will end up serving about two more months after getting credit for time served.

Couto, who is the founder and lead investigator for the Animal Recovery Mission, calls Tuesday's development a victory nonetheless. He said people who are convicted of animal cruelty often do not serve time in prison or jail for it.

"Any prison or jail time is a plus and it's a step in the right direction," Couto said.

Navarro will also be on probation for four years, and has been ordered to have no contact with animals.

