

Farm owner guilty of lesser charges in animal cruelty case

BY CHUCK WEBER WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30TH 2016



WEST PALM BEACH (CBS12) —

Jurors have found a former Loxahatchee slaughterhouse operator guilty of two misdemeanor charges of animal cruelty, and two other misdemeanor counts of inhumanely killing animals. Jorge Garcia beat the two felony animal cruelty charges against him.

Moments after the verdict was announced, the judge ordered Garcia into custody.

Garcia was the first to go on trial, since the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office raided three animal slaughterhouses in the Loxahatchee area, this past fall.

Garcia's 'Rancho Garcia' was one of the farms.

A woman who went undercover for a private organization called Animal Recovery Mission, or ARM, got video of Garcia and his workers killing two goats-- slitting their throats while still alive. State law requires animals first be desensitized to pain.

Even though Garcia beat the felony charges against him, prosecutors said they would still seek jail time.

"Listen, we're happy," said Richard Couto of ARM. "The animals that were clearly butchered alive, those are crimes. Those are crimes."

Garcia's lawyer, Andrew Stine, said he would appeal.

"With no Sheriff, with no law enforcement to testify, I think the appellate courts are going to have a hard time swallowing that pill," said Stine.

Garcia told CBS12 he had a legitimate slaughter and livestock business at the same location for 25 years. Garcia's lawyer revealed in court his client had recently lost his farm to foreclosure. Garcia now faces up to a year in jail for each of the cruelty counts, and 60 days for each of the inhumane killing charges.

The judge set April 26 as Garcia's sentencing date.