

## Farm owner found guilty on animal cruelty charges

*Defense attorney plans to appeal verdict*

By John Dzenitis 6:36 PM EDT Mar 30, 2016



**WEST PALM BEACH, Fla.** —A farm owner has been found guilty of animal cruelty after an animal rights group went undercover and recorded him slaughtering goats.

Jorge Garcia was facing felony charges but the jury decided to convict him on lesser misdemeanor charges of animal cruelty and slaughtering goats in an inhumane way.

Garcia's farm in Loxahatchee was one of three properties raided last year by the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, following undercover recordings by a Miami-based animal rights group, Animal Recovery Mission.

ARM paid members to go undercover and buy goats to be slaughtered at Garcia's farm. They used hidden cameras to record the goats being hoisted up by their hind legs and having their throats slit.

The woman who secretly recorded the slaughter of goats at Rancho Garcia took the stand Tuesday.

The woman, who did not want her identity revealed, testified she was paid by ARM to buy goats for slaughter at Rancho Garcia. The woman and another ARM member recorded the slaughter with cameras hidden in a watch, a water bottle and a car alarm "clicker," the woman said.

Prosecutors argued that the manner in which the goats were killed was cruel and painful and that it took the goats an unnecessarily long time to die.

Garcia's defense attorney argued that the goats were killed for food at the request of undercover ARM members, and the slaughter of livestock can seem graphic to the average person.

In their closing argument, prosecutors argued that the goats were killed in a cruel and painful way by having their throats cut while being hoisted up by their legs.

Garcia was charged with slaughtering goats in an inhumane way.

In an exclusive interview with WPBF 25 News in December, Garcia claimed ARM and its founder Richard "Kudo" Couto were seeking publicity and donations by making sensational and unfounded allegations.

At the time of the raid, ARM claimed horses were being slaughtered and animals tortured. After reviewing the case, the State Attorney's Office told WPBF 25 News there wasn't any evidence of horses being slaughtered on the farm.

Despite a lack of evidence, ARM continues to call Garcia a "well-known horse killer" who sells animals for "black magic purposes."

Garcia is facing two years behind bars and will be sentenced on April 26.

Garcia's farm on Orange Boulevard was shut down after his arrest, and his house has been foreclosed.

Garcia's defense attorney plans on appealing his case, arguing that the undercover recordings were a violation of Florida's two-party consent law, which states that both parties need to know they're being recorded.

Garcia's attorney has argued that the undercover recordings were illegal because they were recorded on Garcia's private property without his knowledge and that the ARM members lied to gain access.