

Man convicted of animal cruelty sentenced

By Jimmie Johnson UPDATED 6:49 PM EDT Apr 26, 2016



LOXAHATCHEE, Fla. — The man found guilty of multiple counts of animal cruelty in connection with an illegal slaughterhouse investigation in Loxahatchee was sentenced Tuesday.

Family and friends watched as a judge sentenced Jorge Garcia, owner of the now closed Garcia Ranch in Loxahatchee, to 364 days in jail and one year of probation.

He is to also have no contact with any animals.

Palm Beach County deputies raided Garcia Ranch last year after an animal rights group conducted an undercover sting on his property.

WPBF 25 News learned Animal Recovery Mission (ARM), a Miami-based nonprofit, paid for goats to be slaughtered at his farm so they could film it.

ARM also claims Garcia slaughtered horses at his farm, but evidence to support those allegations was never found.

Garcia has always claimed his innocence. He spoke to WPBF 25 News exclusively and said it was all a set up.

Members of the animal rights group that conducted the sting operation said the judge's ruling sets a precedent for future cases.

"Getting a jail sentence, a year basically in prison, off of some misdemeanors for, really, for a first time precedence case is huge, especially for farm animals that are many times looked over," one member said.

Garcia's attorney is not pleased but is still standing by his client. He insists the video was done illegally and should have not been used as evidence in a court of law.

"It's been our belief all along that you cannot come on to a person's property and video record them without their permission and that's what happened in this case, and that's why there was no Palm Beach County sheriffs who testified. That's why there was no animal care and control personnel that testified," defense attorney Andrew Stine said.

Stine said his client did not testify because he did not want to subject Garcia to incriminating himself. They plan to appeal the ruling.

"People say that life is about second chances, which I generally agree. However, Mr. Garcia already had a second chance," the judge said.

In 2005, Garcia pleaded guilty to felony animal cruelty and was given three years of probation.