



Group Releases Video of Alleged Animal Abuse at Florida Dairy Farm

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Publix Suspends Milk Deliveries From Dairy Farm

"We are deeply saddened and appalled by the actions witnessed in this video," farm owner says

A South Florida group dedicated to protecting animals released footage Thursday showing what they say is disturbing animal abuse at a dairy farm, as Publix said they're suspending raw milk deliveries from the farm.

The Animal Recovery Mission released the undercover video that it says was filmed at the Larson Dairy Farm in Okeechobee.

According to ARM, an undercover investigator was able to get a job at the farm, where they documented the continued abuse of cows. The video shows employees kicking and beating the cows, sometimes repeatedly hitting them with sticks and other objects.

The group says employees and independent contractors at the dairy farm were told to get as much milk out of the cows as necessary, even if that meant using pieces of steel as weapons.

"Larson Dairy's violence towards animals, is both disturbing and horrific. It saddens me knowing that these cows are still in the hands of such abusers. The unfortunate reality is the abusive practices we found at Larson are a plague across much of the dairy industry. We are committed to ensuring those responsible are brought to justice," Richard Couto, Founder and Lead Investigator of ARM, said in a statement.

Jacob Larson, the owner of the farm, said he was "appalled" by the video. "We are deeply saddened and appalled by the actions witnessed in this video, which first came to our attention this morning. The unusual use of force is simply unacceptable on our dairy or on any other farm," Larson said in a statement. "We have strict protocols involving animal care and clearly the behavior shown in this video goes against everything we stand for and will not be tolerated."

Larson said the employee in the video has been terminated and that further action could be taken after the video is analyzed and investigated.

"We are equally concerned about the manner in which this video was brought to our attention," Larson said. "Had the 'undercover' employee brought this to our attention when it occurred we may have been able to prevent it earlier."

ARM said they are in contact with state and federal authorities and said they are requesting charges be brought.

"There will be a criminal investigation and I believe that there will be criminal charges forthcoming," Okeechobee County Sheriff Noel Stephen said at a news conference Thursday.

Meanwhile, grocery chain Publix announced Thursday that they were suspending raw milk deliveries from Larson Dairy in response to the video.

"We are aware of the undercover video taken at Larson Dairy and are shocked and disturbed by the cruelty shown toward the animals," Publix said in a statement on Twitter.

The company said the Florida Department of Agriculture told them they will be visiting the farm as quickly as possible to ensure the safety of the animals.

"At Publix, we are committed to animal welfare and are focused on working with suppliers who share the same goals," the company said.