

FLORIDA

New investigation reveals pile of dead cows at dairy farm

Arrest warrants issued in previous abuse case discovered by ARM

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DEERFIELD BEACH, Fla. - The Animal Recovery Mission released new video showing a pile of dead cows that it claims came from a dairy farm in the same town where another farm was recently accused of inhumane treatment.

Meanwhile, [Okeechobee County](#) Sheriff's Office announced arrest warrants have been issued in a previous dairy farm abuse investigation.

"The Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office received these allegations one week ago. This investigation has been ongoing all week. Today, the lead investigator met with the State Attorney's Office and presented the evidence thus

far. Warrants have been issued and the suspects are actively being sought," Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Michele Bell said in a statement.

ARM demands felony charges against dairy farm workers accused of abusing cows

Bell said the Sheriff's Office has not received any reports or allegations regarding any other operation in Okeechobee County.

ARM investigators said the undercover video was recorded in August by an investigator who posed as an employee at Burnham Dairy Farm. The farm is located in Okeechobee, where another farm was recently exposed by ARM. Publix announced last week that it has suspended raw milk deliveries from Larson Dairy Farm after ARM released video showing workers kicking and beating the cows.

The most recent video shows a worker force-feeding seemingly malnourished cows and calves. It also shows the cows being kept in flooded cages. One of the wet, newborn calves can be seen shivering in the cold air.

ARM investigators said the milking barns' walls and equipment were covered in feces, and many of the calves were kept in enclosures with dead cows.



Animal Recovery Mission investigators released undercover video showing, among other things, a pile of dead cows. "What in the world are they thinking putting live dairy calves, female dairy calves ... with diseased, dead animals?" ARM lead investigator Richard Couto said at a news conference in Deerfield Beach.

Jim Sleeper, chief executive officer of Southeast Milk Inc., a cooperative of family-owned dairies, released a statement Thursday saying his organization has a "zero-tolerance policy for animal abuse."

"Any employee of a farm marketing its milk through SMI who is found to have violated our animal care guidelines, as well as any employee who witnessed abuse and failed to report it, should be terminated," Sleeper said.

Sleeper went on to say that SMI "will work with our member dairies to do better, for our customers, for our customers, our community and our cows."

The owners of Burnham Dairy Farm said in a statement that they are "taking immediate action" involving their employees.

"We were appalled to see those images," Randy and Douglas Burnham said in a joint statement. "While some of them reflect our struggle in the face of historic severe weather in Florida, we also can't deny that others reflect a failure of our farm policies and management. We are taking immediate action regarding our employees. At the same time, we are working with animal care experts in our industry to change our on-farm practices because we need to do better by our customers, our community and, most of all, our animals."

ARM investigators asked for the state to pursue criminal charges.

"Cruelty to animals has no place in agricultural practices," state veterinarian Dr. Michael Short said in a statement. "The welfare of animals in agriculture is a vital part of farmers and ranchers' responsibility to be good stewards of all of God's creatures."