



Dairy cattle experts say national data suggests animal care is improving despite cow abuse incident

Michelle Quesada
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Southeast Milk is the company that collects milk from Florida and Georgia dairy farms and transports it to processing plants. A representative from Southeast Milk said their employees have never witnessed abuse at Larson Dairy Farm, but following the allegations Southeast Milk has notified the National Milk Producers Federation which oversees members of its FARM program. The National Milk Producers Federation said 98 percent of domestic milk supply is enrolled in its program. After the allegations, the federation has placed Larson Dairy Farm on probationary status, notifying any processor it is affiliated with.

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

Ferris said there are other ways to get resisting heifers into milking pins.

"Sometimes you can bring them in before they start to lactate, you can encourage them with a little bit of grain," he said. "Or have them go in with cows that already know what they are doing."

Other livestock behavior experts say where you position yourself around an animal may make it move away from you.

Ferris encourages people who may be concerned after this incident, to take a tour of a local dairy farm to see how it works.

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