

Two dairy farm workers arrested, accused of animal abuse in Okeechobee

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Okeechobee County deputies have arrested two more dairy farm employees who are accused of animal abuse.

Larson Dairy employees Juan Carrasco, 35, and Juan Carlos Hernandez Camacho, 44, were arrested May 21 after photos and videos released by the Animal Recovery Mission in November sparked an investigation.

The Animal Recovery Mission, a nonprofit animal cruelty investigative organization, had one of its investigators go undercover as an employee at the farm in August. The group then released videos that appear to show Larson Dairy employees kicking cows and hitting them with metal rods.

Another Larson Dairy worker, Helias Cruz, 50, was arrested in November and is accused of kicking a cow.

"Larson Dairy's violence towards animals is both disturbing and horrific," animal group founder Richard Couto said. "It saddens me knowing that these cows are still in the hands of such abusers."



The Animal Recovery Mission, a nonprofit organization that investigates animal abuse, went undercover at Larson Dairy. The organization says the company abused their dairy cows. (Photo: Courtesy of Animal Recovery Mission (ARM))

Larson Dairy had been a milk supplier to Publix, which suspended deliveries from the farm upon the release of the videos. The company issued a statement on Twitter saying: "We are aware of the undercover video taken at Larson Dairy and are shocked and disturbed by the cruelty shown toward the animals. We are suspending raw milk deliveries from that farm."

The Animal Recovery Mission also conducted investigations into two other Okeechobee dairies, Burnham Dairy and McArthur Dairy, which led to three McArthur Dairy employees' arrests in December.

All three dairies are members of Southeast Milk Inc., which placed the dairies on probation.

Southeast Milk also held mandatory training, adopted stricter animal care policies and worked to introduce video surveillance in all of its member dairies.

"SMI and its members have upheld these commitments and continue engaging and challenging our members to improve through a variety of efforts and hard work," Jim Sleper, CEO of Southeast Milk, said in a news release. "We are passionate and confident about moving forward with the right training, technology, and processes in place that will ensure the welfare of our animals."

We are aware of the undercover video taken at Larson Dairy and are shocked and disturbed by the cruelty shown toward the animals. We are suspending raw milk deliveries from that farm. We are also in contact with the FL Dept of Agriculture, and they have advised us they.

...we will be visiting Larson Dairy as quickly as possible to ensure the safety and well-being of the animals. At Publix, we are committed to animal welfare and are focused on working with suppliers who share the same goals.