

Kroger, Meijer suspend milk deliveries from Natural Prairie Dairy organic farm in response to videos alleging cow mistreatment

By [ALEXIA ELEJALDE-RUIZ](#) JUL 26, 2019 | 5:03 PM

Kroger and Meijer have announced they are suspending milk deliveries from Natural Prairie Dairy in the wake of newly released undercover video showing alleged mistreatment of cows at the organic farm.

Natural Prairie Dairy, a large family-owned operation with some 14,000 cows in northern Texas, supplies raw milk for use in the private-label organic brands of several retailers, including Ohio-based Kroger, parent company of Mariano's. The farm is in the midst of building another dairy for 4,350 dairy cows, in Newton County in northwest Indiana, to boost distribution to customers in the Midwest and on the East Coast.

In video released Tuesday by animal welfare group Animal Recovery Mission, workers at the Texas farm are seen kicking cows or prodding them with screwdrivers and dragging cows that struggle to walk with ropes tied around their heads. Some cows are shown tied with their heads to their flanks and carried with front-loaders.

Animal Recovery Mission was also behind the viral undercover videos of calves being kicked, hit and dragged at Indiana's Fair Oaks Farms, which resulted in criminal charges against three workers and led several retailers, including Jewel-Osco, to pull the farm's flagship product, ultrapasteurized Fairlife milk, from their shelves.

Chicago-based Fairlife suspended milk supply from Fair Oaks Farms after that video was released and recently completed third-party audits of all of its farms. Fairlife does not source milk from Natural Prairie Dairy, the company said.

In a statement, the owners of Natural Prairie Dairy said the video is “heavily edited” and “produced by a group whose stated goal is to abolish all American dairy farms.”

Owners Donald and Cheri De Jong said “some of the sequences warrant internal and external investigation.”

One worker has been suspended pending an investigation, law enforcement was invited to visit anytime and independent third-party auditors were visiting the farm this week to examine its organic operations and animal welfare practices, they said.

Kroger, one of the largest supermarket chains in the country, said it was suspending the supply of raw milk from the farm for its products, pending an audit by the National Dairy Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) program.

Kroger said it has alternative supplier sources and will continue to sell its organic milk.

In a statement, Meijer spokesman Frank Guglielmi said, “At this point, Meijer is not receiving any milk product from the farm identified in the most recent video.”

The industry-led FARM program, run by the National Milk Producers Federation and Dairy Management, Inc., said it was investigating the situation and a third-party audit would be conducted. But unlike with the Fair Oaks Farm video, the FARM program suggested the images shown in the Natural Prairie video did not constitute abuse.