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KROGER CUTS TIES WITH ORGANIC DAIRY AFTER

INVESTIGATION EXPOSES ANIMAL ABUSE

The retail chain suspends its partnership with Natural Prairie Dairy after undercover footage reveals workers shoving wounded, feces-covered cows with shovels and screwdrivers.

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This week, major grocery chain Kroger issued a statement that it would sever ties with its organic raw milk supplier, Texas-based Natural Prairie Dairy (NPD), until an audit by Farmers Assuring Responsible Management

(FARM) is conducted. The move comes after an undercover investigation by animal-rights group Animal Recovery Mission (ARM) revealed horrific abuse at the 25,000-cow dairy farm. At NPD—which also supplies raw milk to Target and Albertsons—ARM found workers abusing animals with shovels and screwdrivers, along with many cows living in squalid, feces-ridden conditions with open flesh wounds, scrapes, and untreated eye infections. "Natural Prairie Dairy has had a history of violating organic guidelines," ARM founder Richard Couto said. "Once again, they've been caught by the Animal Recovery Mission."

In June, ARM released undercover footage it gathered at Indiana's Fair Oaks Farms—a supplier for the Fairlife milk brand that bills itself as a "humane" company owned by NPD owner Donal De Jong. ARM found workers routinely kicking, stabbing, and beating calves, which led many Fairlife retail partners—such as Tony's Fresh Market, Family Express, and Jewel-Osco—to remove the Coca-Cola distributed brand from its shelves. "ARM thanks Kroger supermarkets for making the right and ethical decision in stepping aside from Natural Prairie Dairy," Couto said. "We are still hopeful that they will make the right decision in discontinuing relations with Fairlife brands."

ARM's recent investigations have focused on dairy farms that make "humane" and "organic" claims, both labels that ARM has demonstrated do not translate to animal well-being. "There's no such thing as happy cows in the dairy industry," Couto said.