

## Fair Oaks Farms: New video shows adult cows being abused at Indiana farm

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One week after releasing an undercover video documenting animal abuse and cruelty at Fair Oaks Farms in northern Indiana, Miami-based animal welfare group Animal Recovery Mission has released another video. (Photo: Mykal McEldowney)

FAIR OAKS, Ind. - An animal rights group that infiltrated a popular Indiana dairy farm and captured disturbing undercover video that has led to animal cruelty charges against three former farm workers released new footage Wednesday, June 12, showing workers punching and striking adult cows with poles while loading them into a farm milking carousel.

Animal Recovery Mission said its new video shows workers abusing adult cows behind the scenes at Fair Oaks Farms at a milking carousel at the popular agritourism destination about 70 miles (113 kilometers) south of Chicago.

The Miami-based group's release of the new footage comes a week after it released video showing workers kicking and throwing calves at Fair Oaks Farms' dairies. That

and other video the group later released led to animal cruelty charges against three former employees. One was taken into custody Wednesday.

The new video shows employees punching adult cows, striking them with metal poles and apparently breaking the tails of some uncooperative cows the workers are trying to load into the carousel. Farm tour footage that is part of the video captures a guide telling visitors that cows like the carousel, saying it's "a joy ride for them."

The animal rights group said the video also shows cows being milked just hours after giving birth, with the placenta sacks still visible and blood coating their legs. Fair Oaks didn't immediately respond to a request for comment about the latest video. Farm officials have said the farm draws about 500,000 tourists per year.

Animal Recovery Mission spokeswoman Rachel Taylor told The Indianapolis Star that the new video exposes mistreatment of cows at Indiana's largest dairy farm. "They are not showing the public everything that happens," she said.

The group's director of investigations, AJ Garcia, said the new video shows abuse being carried out by different farm employees during a different time period than when the alleged abuse of calves occurred. He said two videos released last week were filmed in the second half of 2018, while the newly released video was shot this spring.



**ARM Director of Investigations, Aj Garcia, holds a press conference at the JW Marriott to speak about a newly released video by ARM, showing graphic images of alleged abuse toward sick and**

**injured cows being milked at Fair Oaks Farms, with the title "Operation Fairlife," on Wednesday, June 12, 2019. (Photo: Michelle Pemberton/IndyStar)**

Garcia said police have been provided all of the information about the group's undercover investigation this spring, and more videos will be released in the future. He said an undercover investigator with the group who shot the new video received no training after being hired by Fair Oaks Farms, and he witnessed abuse on his first day on the job but did not take part in it.

After observing the abuse, that investigator reported it to his supervisors, but the employees who carried out the abuse were never reprimanded, Garcia said.

After the first videos were made public, Fair Oaks Farms' founder Mike McCloskey said in a Facebook post that he took responsibility for the abuse and that the company fired four employees and banned a third-party truck driver who were shown in calf abuse video.

"I am disgusted by and take full responsibility for the actions seen in the footage, as it goes against everything that we stand for in regards to responsible cow care and comfort," McCloskey wrote.

Fair Oaks Farms is the flagship farm for Fairlife, a national brand of higher protein, higher calcium and lower fat milk. Some retailers have pulled Fairlife products from their shelves, including Chicago-area grocery chain Jewel-Osco.

The Newton County Sheriff's Department said Wednesday that one of the three fired workers, Edgar Gardozo-Vasquez, 36, of Brook, was taken into custody and is being held at the Newton County Jail on a felony charge of torturing or mutilating a vertebrate animal and misdemeanor animal cruelty. The department says U.S. Immigration Customs Enforcement has placed a hold on Gardozo-Vasquez. It says there are outstanding warrants for two other former Fair Oaks workers.

It's not clear whether Gardozo-Vasquez has an attorney who might comment on his behalf.

Meanwhile, a California man filed a lawsuit Tuesday accusing Chicago-based Fairlife of fraud following the release of the videos.

Alain Michael, of Thousand Oaks, California, says in his lawsuit that he bought Fairlife milk solely because of its guarantee that it provided "extraordinary animal care," but the videos showed that its "'promise' is a sham," The (Northwest Indiana) Times reported. Fairlife says it's reviewing the lawsuit, which was filed in federal court and seeks class-action status and unspecified damages.

Fair Oaks Farms' owners, Mike and Sue McCloskey, are also named as defendants. A message seeking comment was left for the couple.

