

CULTURE

Advocates Rally at Fairlife Over Alleged Animal Abuse at Indiana Farm

Alex Ruppenthal | June 17, 2019 3:20 pm



Fairlife's headquarters at 1001 W. Adams St. in Chicago (Alex Ruppenthal / WTTW News)

For a second straight week, animal welfare advocates rallied outside the headquarters of a Chicago-based dairy company at the center of a national animal abuse story.

A group of protesters gathered Monday afternoon at the West Loop offices of Fairlife, a nationally renowned brand of high-protein, high-calcium and lower fat milk. The company came under fire earlier this month when an animal welfare

group released a series of videos showing workers at Fairlife's top dairy supplier abusing cows.

On June 4, Animal Recovery Mission released the first of a series of videos that show workers at Indiana's Fair Oaks Farms kicking and throwing calves and engaging in other forms of alleged animal abuse. The Miami-based animal welfare group had infiltrated the popular dairy farm and [captured undercover footage of the incidents](#).

The group has released additional videos over the past week that show [employees punching adult cows](#), striking them with metal poles and, it appears, breaking the tails of cows that were not cooperating as workers tried to load them into a milking carousel.



LIVE PROTEST in Chicago Against Fairlife and Coca-Cola Lead by Free From Harm
Posted by Jane Velez-Mitchell

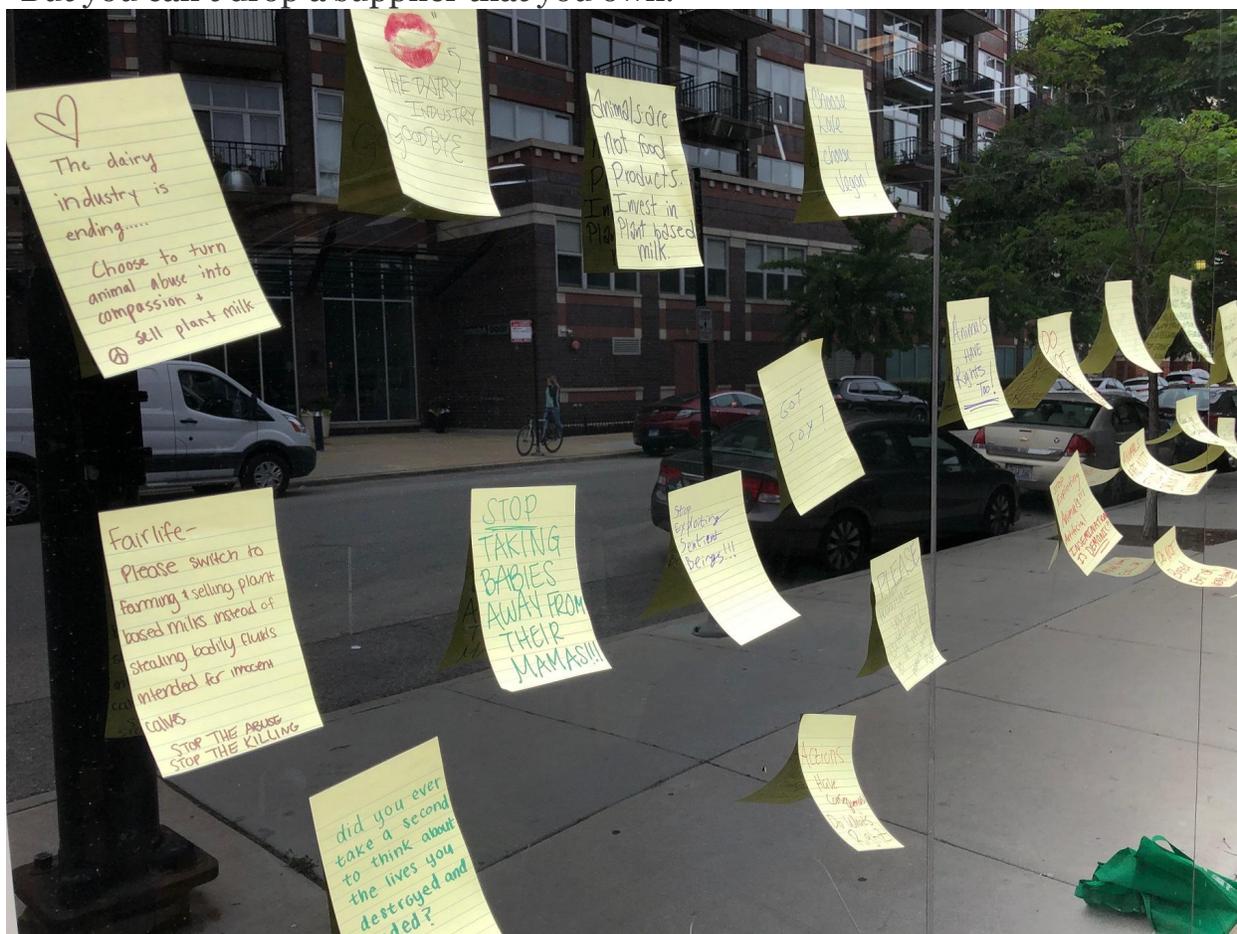
Located about 70 miles southwest of Chicago, Fair Oaks is popular with visitors and has been called the “Disneyland of agricultural tourism” by Food & Wine magazine.

Fair Oaks is the flagship dairy supplier for Fairlife, which was launched by Coca-Cola and Select Milk Producers, a co-op of dairy farms operated by Mike and Sue McCloskey. The McCloskeys also own Fair Oaks Farms.

Fairlife has discontinued the use of milk from Fair Oaks Farms and is in the process of auditing all 30 of its supplying farms, which will be completed by July 6, according to Fairlife's [latest statement in response to the video](#). Additionally, four former Fair Oaks Farms employees have been fired for the alleged abuse, and [three were charged last week with animal cruelty](#).

But animal welfare advocates say the only way to rectify the situation is for Fairlife to shut down.

“Another game of smoke and mirrors that they’re playing is that they say they dropped Fair Oaks Farms as a supplier,” said Robert Grillo, president of Chicago-based animal rights group Free From Harm, which organized Monday’s rally. “But you can’t drop a supplier that you own.”



Notes left at Fairlife's Chicago headquarters by animal welfare advocates (Alex Ruppenthal / WTTW News)

Following the rally, advocates left notes on the windows of Fairlife's offices, some of which read, “This is not an isolated incident!! Ditch dairy,” “Animals are not ours for profit! There is no such thing as humane abuse,” and “It’s time to have a conscience!”

“We want the owners of this company and this brand to be held accountable,” Grillo said during Monday’s rally. “We don’t want just low-level workers being used as scapegoats when the responsibility is with the owners. They created the culture of abuse [that] thrives on these farms.”

Some retailers have pulled Fairlife products from their shelves, including Chicago-area grocery chain Jewel-Osco.

Last week, a California man filed a lawsuit accusing Fairlife of fraud following the release of the videos.