



St. Lucie Co. farm raided after illegal slaughter claims

by Nick Viviani | Dylan Huberman

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This image released by ARM shows a man next to a goat that had been slaughtered at a farm that it described as an illegal slaughterhouse farm. (ARM)

FORT PIERCE, Fla. (CBS12) — The St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office (SLCSO) raided a farm in Fort Pierce, where animals were allegedly being illegally slaughtered.

Deputies were assisted by the nonprofit 'Animal Recovery Mission' (ARM), which provided video surveillance that led up to the raid.

"These people unfortunately took enjoyment out of the torture of the animal," said Richard Couto, the Founder of ARM. "They would laugh and joke as the animals were screaming."



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Couto says that he took video while undercover on the farm over the course of six months, showing animals dangling and suffering...until they were brutally killed.

ARM provided graphic video of its findings, which [can be seen here](#). (*Warning: the video can be disturbing to watch*)

Couto says that's only part of the horrors he claims to have witnessed.

"Animals being skinned alive, butchered alive, goats being strung upside down, screaming, their heads slowly sawed off, pigs being stabbed repeatedly all over their bodies," he asserted. "They were also breeding animals for ritualistic purposes, for black magic they were also training animals to fight on this property."



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The sheriff's office has confirmed to CBS12 News that arrests were made at the illegal slaughter farm, but has yet to confirm how many, what the charges are, or Couto's 'ritualistic' and 'fighting' claims.

However, ARM stated arrests were made on counts of animal cruelty resulting in death, operating an animal slaughter farm without a license, and other egregious crimes.

The organization alleges its sting operation discovered violations of the Humane Slaughter Act, which requires animals to be treated [humanely](#) and killed in quick and effective way.

Anne Hall, who owns a butcher shop about a mile away from the farm, confirmed that animals are required to receive some form of sedation before being butchered, so they don't feel pain.

When a CBS12 News crew showed her Couto's video, she was taken aback.

"It was really bad. It was saddening, to say the least," said Hall, the Owner of Best Choice Meats. "There's definitely a different way that could have been done. It's almost Neanderthal. This will be a lesson to anybody else out there that is doing this that the animals need to be treated with respect, and there is a process for that."

Couto noted that the dogs, cats, pigs, goats, sheep, cows, and birds that were removed from the farm will be taken to an ARM Sanctuary, and will receive care for the rest of their lives.

“They’re literally going from one of the worst properties to one of the best, so it’s a happy ending for the animals,” he shared.