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Suspect arrested in St. Lucie County animal slaughterhouse

Various animals removed from farm on Godwin Road near Fort Pierce



One person has been arrested in connection with an illegal animal slaughterhouse in St. Lucie County, the sheriff said Thursday afternoon during a news conference.





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Posted at 1:55 PM, Feb 15, 2024 and last updated 7:50 PM, Feb 15, 2024

FORT PIERCE, Fla. — One person has been arrested in connection with an illegal animal slaughterhouse in St. Lucie County, the sheriff said Thursday afternoon during a news conference.

Sheriff Keith Pearson said Miguel Cabrera, 57, was arrested during [Wednesday's raid](#) at 200 Godwin Road, west of Fort Pierce. He faces two counts of animal cruelty.

Pearson said Animal Recovery Mission approached the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office about the farm in December.

Capt. Troy Norman said deputies recovered more than 100 animals and instruments used in the slaughter.

WATCH: News conference on animal cruelty arrest



"There was also meat that was located there that was from previous slaughters

that was actually there for sale," Norman said.

Lead Detective Clay Mangrum said the animals endured "quite a bit of suffering" before they were killed.

ARM said the raid was the result of a six-month undercover investigation, during which video showed "goats hoisted upside down" with "their throats slashed and skinned alive," as well as "pigs pinned down and stabbed in the heart multiple times."

"They were being brutalized," ARM founder Richard Couto said. "They were being skinned alive, butchered alive. Animals were being drowned in boiling water."

A variety of animals – including dogs, cats, pigs, goats, sheep, cows and birds – were removed from the property

The sheriff said Cabrera was seen on the video torturing the animals.

"It was captured on video, the inhumane act," Pearson said. "There's no words to describe what is seen in this video."

Pearson said several others were questioned and could face charges.

"Right now it's just a matter of [detectives] putting the pieces of the puzzle together and holding everybody accountable for their actions," Pearson said.

In his first court appearance Thursday, Cabrera spoke up in his defense.

"In my country killing a pig is normal, that's why I did it," Cabrera, whose neighbors said is from Cuba, told a judge in Spanish.

Neighbors told WPTV they were shocked to see the news and described Cabrera and his housemates as nice and normal.

"Everybody around here raises animals for themselves," neighbor Sayad Noufal

said. "I didn't think anyone was running a business."

"It makes me feel awful," neighbor Luke Marine said. "I have a dog and I love him. He's my little guy. That's horrible."

WPTV was at the farm as deputies were carrying out animals in crates, bagging up evidence and transporting the rescued animals to ARM's animal sanctuary, where they are now rehabilitating.

"The pigs are in their mud holes and their ponds. The cattle are with other cattle. Everybody's doing great," Couto said. "We worked toward what happened yesterday."

Cabrera's bond was set at \$10,000, which Pearson said he posted.

WPTV attempted to contact Cabrera for a comment but he did not reply.

Animal cruelty is a third-degree felony in Florida.