

**EMBARGO: JULY 24, 8:30AM EDT**

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## **Multi Government Agency Criminal Probe Launched in Thoroughbred Racehorse Slaughter Ring**

***Founder of ARM, Richard 'Kudo' Couto, Video Records the Killing and Butchering of  
Funny Biz, Descendant of Secretariat***

***Unregulated and Potentially Contaminated Horse Meat Making its Way into South Florida Food  
Supply***

**BROOKSVILLE, FL, July 24, 2024** — Animal Recovery Mission (ARM) has uncovered the largest illegal horse slaughter ring in the United States. Multiple government agencies have responded with inquiries into the criminal operation, including The Hernando County Sheriff Office (case number: 224-02679), USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service and the Florida Department of Agriculture.

The ring is centralized at a slaughter farm that has been in operation for years, illegally killing animals for human consumption, including newly retired thoroughbred racehorses with their meat being sold on the underground black market. ARM gathered video of the killing and butchering of a thoroughbred racehorse and descendant of the legendary Secretariat, Funny Biz, and has recovered remains.

ARM delivered the case and evidence to the Hernando County Sheriff's and State Attorney's Offices on December 26, 2023. Although an active case number was generated and a probe launched, no arrests have been made and the slaughter farm remains active.

**PRESS CONFERENCE: JULY 24, 2024 - 10.30 am EST**

**Hampton Inn & Suites Tampa Airport Avion Park Westshore**

**5329 Avion Park Drive  
ROOM: Citation 1  
Tampa, Florida 33607**

**Video Evidence Package #1: [Operation Barker - Horse slaughter and the murder of  
Funny Biz.](#)**

**Video Evidence Package #2: [Operation Barker - The Farm](#)**

"Operation Barker" launched when ARM investigators discovered a Craigslist ad for animals and meat for sale in various Florida regions. Undercover investigators were invited to the

Ortiz Slaughter Farm in Brooksville, FL, where they confirmed the farm's illegal activities and documented severe animal cruelty.

The investigation reveals a horrific situation: animals, including horses, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, turkeys, geese, and other birds, are confined in small pens, often cohabiting with the deceased. These animals are being fed the remains of freshly slaughtered animals, and horses are being butchered for human consumption, a second-degree felony in Florida. Disturbingly, some of the horse remains and illegally poached wildlife is being sold for ritualistic purposes. This potentially diseased and contaminated meat is making its way into local markets, butcher shops, restaurants, and catering events, endangering the community's food supply.

Additionally, ARM has found that the farm is illegally procuring, butchering, and selling the meat of champion racehorses for human consumption. Among the undeniable evidence is the shocking discovery that Funny Biz, a descendant of the legendary racehorse Secretariat, was butchered and meat sold to ARM's founder.

“Globally, this is the first time a thoroughbred racehorse has been killed and butchered on film. The State of Florida has the strongest horse slaughter laws in the world and ARM is demanding felony arrest by law enforcement. Lack of enforcement in this case will only increase the cruelty towards horses and other innocent animals.

Recently, actress Lina Esco of CBS' S.W.A.T. joined ARM as an advocate to lend her voice to the cause with a [powerful video message](#) urging immediate action to address the horrific conditions uncovered by ARM.

### **Key Findings:**

**Video Evidence Package #1: [Operation Barker - Horse slaughter and the murder of Funny Biz.](#)**

**Video Evidence Package #2: [Operation Barker -The Farm](#)**

- **Animal Cruelty:** thousands of animals were deprived of water and forced to consume the remains of freshly slaughtered animals.
- **Unsanitary Conditions:** The farm is littered with waste and newly slaughtered animals in shallow graves or burned on-site. This creates severe public health risks.
- **Illegal Meat Sales:** The black market farm sold uninspected and potentially diseased meat to small markets, butcher shops, restaurants, and catering events.
- **Horse Meat for Consumption:** Thoroughbred racehorses were butchered and sold for human consumption.

### **Significant Milestones:**

- **Historic Footage:** ARM captured the first-ever video footage of a champion thoroughbred racehorse being killed, butchered and the horse meat sold for human consumption.

- Wildlife is illegally poached throughout the United States and sold at the farm for ritualistic purposes.
- Federal and State Agency Involvement: The USDA and the Food Safety and Inspection Service are actively involved in the investigation, leveraging their enforcement powers to bring the perpetrators to justice and close the illegal operation.
- Since 2009, ARM has delivered 226 cases to government agencies. This has led to over 200 tactical and criminal raids, arrests, animal rescues and illegal farm closures throughout Florida and the US.

### **Background:**

In Florida, the illegal horse slaughter industry has been a persistent issue despite state and federal regulations. The state has a specific ban on horse slaughter, prohibiting the sale of horse meat for human consumption. With ARM's assistance, the "Good Horse Slaughter Act" was signed into Florida law in 2010, making the sale of horse meat for human consumption a felony crime.

Certain members of the public throughout the US consider horse meat a medical elixir. People are consuming the meat thinking it cures blood disorders, helps with side effects from chemotherapy, cures AIDS and men are consuming horse meat for their libido. None of the above holds any truth.

[Animal Recovery Mission](https://www.animalrecoverymission.org) is a Florida-based nonprofit 501(c)(3) animal advocacy organization. ARM's mission is to be an uncompromising defending force for the welfare of animals in addition to putting an end to and preventing pain, suffering, and torture inflicted as a result of inhumane practices <https://www.animalrecoverymission.org>

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