



Horse meat trade: Hernando County men accused of killing horse abandon farm, flee with animals

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Farm abandoned amid horse meat investigation

FOX 13 has learned the Hernando County farm at the center of an investigation into horse meat has been abandoned, with several animals taken.

BROOKSVILLE, Fla. - An alleged illegal slaughterhouse at the center of an animal cruelty investigation has been abandoned.

FOX 13 first broke the story after animal activists shared video of a former racehorse being killed for her meat at the farm.

Animal activists say the [Hernando County](#) Sheriff's office failed to take steps to shut it down and now a majority of the animals are gone.

PREVIOUS: Florida's illegal horse meat trade: Undercover video shows racehorse butchered on camera

The farm in Brooksville is the site of an alleged illegal slaughterhouse that we've been investigating since May.

FOX 13 first broke this story last Tuesday night. After that, the owner of the property said his tenants packed up most of the animals on the farm and left in the middle of the night.



FOX 13 walked the property on Monday and saw animal skulls, multiple kill sites for butchering animals and several birds and baby chicks that had been left behind.

The Hernando County Sheriff's office came to collect the remaining animals on Monday.



The Animal Recovery Mission was undercover investigating the slaughterhouse run by the Ortiz family since 2022 and first shared the undercover video of a former racehorse, Funny Biz, being killed. Monday morning, they sent out a press release saying they were planning to rescue the remaining animals from the farm on Vicki Lane.

They planned to take the animals to their sanctuary.

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But when ARM got to the property, the Hernando County Sheriff's office was already taking the animals away.

FOX13 was at the property on Sunday when [protesters were at the property](#) and noticed that the animals were gone.

ARM said it wasn't until their press release went out that the sheriff's office moved on removing the remaining animals.



ARM Investigator Richard 'Kudo' Couto accused the sheriff's office of not moving quickly enough to investigate the killing of Funny Biz, seen butchered for her meat at the farm in November 2023.

Last week, the sheriff's office said it has two open investigations into the farm and said it takes time to make these cases.

Monday, the sheriff's office said they removed five small pigs, one dog, several roosters and chickens. They said they also found one dead pig on the farm.

ALSO: [Horse meat trade: Hernando County sheriff, state attorney respond to criticism from activists](#)

The property owner didn't want to go on camera, but told FOX 13 he made several complaints to the sheriff's office in 2023 about what the Ortiz family was doing on his property.

"You have a property owner and animal defense organization giving evidence of animal torture to a sheriff's office and there's no action taken to help the animals on the property. It's unethical," said Richard Couto, founder of ARM.

FOX 13 asked the Hernando County Sheriff's office if there were warrants for anyone involved in this alleged illegal slaughterhouse. They told us it is still an active investigation.