

# Animals rescued from alleged illegal slaughterhouse arrive at sanctuary

By Genevieve Curtis **Published** August 12, 2024 11:04pm EDT Horse Meat Investigation  
FOX 13 News



## Animals saved from slaughter arrive at sanctuary

A dozen animals – including pigs, ducks and roosters – have been saved from a Hernando County farm that's under investigation for killing a former racehorse.

**BROOKSVILLE, Fla.** - It's a new day for a dozen animals saved from slaughter. Pigs, ducks and roosters arrived at an animal sanctuary Monday from the same Hernando County farm alleged to be an illegal slaughterhouse and under investigation for killing a former racehorse.

It's just a fraction of the animals activists had hoped to rescue.

**Newly obtained documents show the Hernando County Sheriff's Office had knowledge about the troubling property and allegations of animal cruelty almost two years before animal activists alerted them.**

## **PREVIOUS: Hernando County residents say alleged illegal slaughterhouse was problem for years: 'I started to scream'**

On Monday, the animals arrived at the Animal Recovery Mission (ARM) sanctuary.

"We'll just ensure that they have an amazing rest of their lives. These animals will never be sold. They'll never be adopted out," said Richard 'Kudo' Couto, the founder of ARM.

Kudo spent two years undercover, working to expose the farm with the hopes of rescuing the hundreds of animals he saw there.



"It's what we've always done with other sheriff's offices and other counties: tactically raid the property, make arrests, rescue the animals, let them live out their lives at an incredible sanctuary. And that didn't happen. So we're probably looking at still in the high thousands of animals that have now disappeared," said Kudo.



Courtesy: ARM

In December 2023, ARM handed over findings from its undercover operation on the Brooksville farm to the Hernando County Sheriff's Office. That included video of the butchering of a former racehorse named Funny Biz.



ARM INVESTIGATIONS

FOX 13 now has documentation showing the sheriff's office was aware of the farm's activities since at least April 2022, well before ARM's investigation.

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"Apparently nothing happened," said Diane Moreton. In April 2022, she was riding her bike on the Suncoast Trail, which runs alongside the property.

"I saw this poor sheep strung up with two back legs with ropes, the sheep was alive. He's going to tell you differently, it was alive. (The sheep) was screaming and crying – all the animals, a few hundred around," said Moreton, recalling the ordeal that she said sent her into shock.



She called 911 and it's all documented in an HCSO report, which says that a deputy informed the operators about the Humane Slaughter Act, which requires animals be made unconscious before killing them.

The operators assured the deputy, that's what they do. The deputy noted that the operators were skinning the animals in front of other animals and told them they needed to do it in another area. The notes indicate the operator agreed.

With that, it appears the case was closed, even though the farm is not a licensed slaughterhouse.

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"I used to trust the sheriff's office, I have issues with that now," said Moreton.

Moreton is not the only resident who told FOX 13 they made complaints to the sheriff's office about the acts of animal cruelty taking place on the farm.

At this point, only one worker has been arrested for misdemeanor animal cruelty for killing a pig with a hammer.

For Kudo, there are hundreds of animals that he feels should have arrived at the sanctuary as well.



"The sheriff's office had the opportunity to seize all of those animals legally. They had the evidence," said Kudo.

The sheriff's office has continued to say these cases take time and they have two open investigations.

They are working with the FDLE and the Department of Agriculture.

We reached out to the sheriff's office to find out how many complaints it received about the property in the last two and half years. We'll update you when we hear back.