

Nonprofit alleges undercover investigation shows animal cruelty at Arizona dairy farms

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Key Points

- Animal Recovery Mission conducted undercover investigations at two Arizona dairy farms, Rainbow Valley and Butterfield Dairy.
- The nonprofit says the two facilities are violating Arizona law.
- The group delivered its findings to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, which said it would review the matter.

Undercover investigations at two Arizona dairy farms revealed extreme animal cruelty that may violate state law, according to a nonprofit animal rights organization.

Animal Recovery Mission, based in Florida, released an investigation on Wednesday conducted at two Buckeye dairy farms over several months in 2024.

Richard Couto, the nonprofit's founder, said investigators worked undercover to gather footage of conditions at Rainbow Valley and Butterfield Dairy farms. He said

evidence they gathered was among the worst examples of animal cruelty he had ever seen.

"I edited all of the footage myself, and I can tell you, it's brutal stuff," Couto said at a news conference Wednesday morning in Glendale. "This is an extreme case."

Couto said footage from Rainbow Valley shows newborn calves and milking cows were chained, dragged, whipped, stabbed, shot and force-fed, with many dying from abuse. He said the farm's top managers and many of the workers were recorded committing cruelty.

At Butterfield, Couto's team collected evidence of calves being kept in small, cramped cages with dangerous flooring, leading to injuries and death, he said.

Investigators followed trucks that traveled from the farms to the Fairlife production plant in Goodyear, Couto said.

"Imagine being harassed, beaten, having your tail snapped in half," Couto said, holding a bottle of Fairlife milk. "This is a bottle of sadness."

Representatives for Fairlife, Butterfield Dairy and Rainbow Valley Dairy did not respond to inquiries from The Arizona Republic Wednesday.

Couto said his team had delivered his group's investigations to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, and

he called on employees and owners of both farms to be arrested, claiming they had violated state law.

Calbert Gillett, a spokesperson for the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, said detectives looked into whether anyone had reported abuse related to the two dairies over the past year but were unable to locate any animal abuse calls for service.

"There are currently no active animal abuse investigations for these locations," Gillett said. "However, detectives will now be reviewing this matter."