

Fairlife cuts ties with Buckeye dairy farms after investigation reveals animal cruelty

Jimmy Jenkins, Arizona Republic
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Fairlife, a milk company distributed by Coca-Cola, has cut ties with two Buckeye dairy farms after undercover

investigations revealed extreme animal cruelty that may violate state law.

[Animal Recovery Mission](#), based in Florida, [released an investigation](#) on Wednesday conducted at Rainbow Valley and Butterfield Dairy farms over several months in 2024.

Fairlife spokesperson Lisa Lecas responded to the investigation late Wednesday evening, saying the mistreatment of animals in the videos at the Buckeye farms as unacceptable.

"Effective immediately, we have suspended all business with these suppliers and are looking into the circumstances surrounding these videos," Lecas said. "We have zero tolerance for animal abuse. Although we operate as milk processors and do not own farms or cows, we mandate that all our suppliers adhere to stringent animal welfare standards, and we expect nothing less."

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 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."