

Police raid illegal slaughterhouse

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HIALEAH, Fla. (WSVN) -- Three individuals have been arrested after a gruesome investigation of an illegal slaughterhouse.

Rudesindo Acosta and two others are in custody and face several felony charges of animal cruelty after police raided the slaughterhouse, located down a dirt road off of 97th Avenue in Hialeah, Saturday. According to authorities, animals were beaten with sledgehammers and held down while being stabbed.

Two years ago, Richard Couto, from the Animal Recovery Mission, secretly recorded undercover video at the slaughterhouse by posing as a potential buyer. The video shows a man with a hammer moments before he beats a pig and stabs it to death. "The conditions that are down there now are just terrible, you wouldn't believe it, it's terrible. I mean, it's unbelievable. They've got grinders, they got hoists where you can hoist them up. It's pretty bad. It's sad," said animal rescuer Steve Rubin.

Pigs, goats, cows, sheep, horses and ponies were inside the slaughterhouse living in cramped spaces, often in their own feces. The animals were also taken to slaughter even if they were sick or near death. "Every animal that is on this slaughter farm is entering the food chain," said Couto. "You can come in and buy a pig on this property for \$130. You can buy horse meat from one of these properties: 20 bucks a pound."

Investigators say the meat from the animals was sold to customers who arrived at the front gate of the property. People showed up at the house during the raid with the intention of buying animals for Thanksgiving. "We came to buy chicken, turkey," said the women. "Somebody gave us the number, so we just came to buy."

"If you know the right people, you can enter these farms and buy any type of meat you want. You can go up to a live animal, pick them out, they'll walk up to it with a sledgehammer, kill it and torture that animal right in front of you, butcher it and leave with it in packages," said Couto.

More than a dozen animals were too sick to save and had to be euthanized.

The remaining animals are being taken away by rescue groups to farms throughout South Florida and the country.