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Video Shows Alleged Animal Abuse at Florida Egg Farm

Hens living in deplorable conditions, tortured and killed by employees, animal rights group says

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The animal rights group ARM released video they shot undercover at a farm near Lake Wales that is one of the biggest suppliers of eggs in the country. (Published Tuesday, Jan. 16, 2018)

WHAT TO KNOW

Cal-Maine is the largest producer of shell eggs in the United States
The hens live among dead chickens and regularly die from dehydration, starvation, egg binding and illnesses, ARM says

An animal rights group has released new undercover video of what they say are hens living in deplorable conditions at a Florida egg farm.

The Animal Recovery Mission released the video Tuesday of its investigation into the Cal-Maine Egg Farm in Lake Wales. Cal-Maine is the largest producer of shell eggs in the United States.

According to ARM, hens are overcrowded in cages where they are trampled and strangled to death. The hens also live among dead chickens and regularly die from dehydration, starvation, egg binding and illnesses from living in unsanitary conditions, including "walls of cockroaches" in the close quarters, ARM says.

The hens are also tortured and abused by employees who kick, punch, and throw them, slam them to the ground, beat them to death with sticks or pull them apart alive, ARM said.

"These brutal actions are being executed by both employees of the facility and managers alike and are clear violations of company codes of conducts and animal welfare policies required to be a humane certified business," ARM said in a news release.

In a statement Tuesday, Cal-Maine said they are "an industry leader in accepting and implementing animal welfare measures," and said all employees involved in the care and handling of hens must comply with a company code of conduct regarding the ethical treatment of hens, which also requires them to report any possible violations.

"The ARM video was taken by a former employee acting as an undercover activist, and he chose to disregard required farm procedures as part of his intent to misrepresent our efforts to provide proper care for our hens," the statement read. "The employee's job included identifying and addressing the type of issues shown on the video, and he failed to meet his job requirements."

ARM said one manager at the farm has been charged with animal cruelty, and authorities in Polk County are investigating.

Cal-Maine said the employee was immediately terminated and that the company is cooperating with the sheriff's office and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and gave them access to the facility in Lake Wales.

"They reported they did not find comparable conditions to what was shown on the video. We believe that this was an isolated incident and does not reflect the ethical standards of animal care expected of all Cal-Maine Foods employees," Cal-Maine's statement read. "Further, we continue to work with our animal welfare team to prevent this from happening in the future."

According to the company website, Cal-Maine markets their eggs under the Egg-Land's Best and Land O' Lakes brands. They also market cage-free eggs under the Farmhouse and 4-Grain brands.

The video is the latest from ARM, which has also documented alleged animal abuse at Florida dairy farms.

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