



News Release

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"Connecting Cows, Cooperatives, Capitol Hill, and Consumers"



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Statement on Status of Okeechobee County Dairy Farms

From Emily Meredith, Chief of Staff, NMPF:

ARLINGTON, VA – “The National Dairy FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) Program – like farmers and residents across the state of Florida – is outraged and saddened by the recent videos showing improper animal care practices on Florida dairy farms. The dairy industry cannot succeed without healthy and well-cared for animals, and animal abuse of any kind is never tolerated.

“All of the Okeechobee County farms appearing in the video are members of Southeast Milk (SMI), a dairy cooperative that has been a participating member of the National Dairy FARM™ (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) Program since 2016.

“The FARM Program, established in 2009 by the National Milk Producers Federation, comprises dairy farmers, cooperatives and processors across the United States. The program, whose participating farms produce 98% of the nation’s milk supply, expects its members to follow rigorous guidelines for dairy farm animal care practices. In helping members keep pace with the latest available veterinary science and with evolving agriculture technology, the FARM Program creates a culture of continuous improvement.

“In the coming weeks, the FARM Program’s animal care experts will work with SMI to accelerate the adoption and implementation of the newest iteration of the program, Version 3.0. This version requires:

- Enhanced training of workers,
- Stricter requirements for working relationships with veterinarians, and
- Stronger corrective action plan requirements for farms that are not meeting guidelines and standards.

“The FARM Program is also exploring options to make more on-farm monitoring solutions and employee training and management solutions even more available and accessible to all farmers. Dairies are 24-7-365, always-on facilities, and it is essential for farmers and farm managers to be able to evaluate every part of day-to-day operations to ensure compliance with FARM Program training and best practices.

“This past month has been a sobering reminder of the need not just for continuous improvement in our on-farm best practices, but also for continued adherence to the standards established by our industry.”

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The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), based in Arlington, VA, develops and carries out policies that advance the well-being of dairy producers and the cooperatives they own. The members of NMPF's cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. For more on NMPF's activities, visit our website at www.nmpf.org.