

February 9, 1999  
HAND DELIVERED

Frank Parrish  
District Attorney for the First District  
Camden County  
202 E. Colonial Ave.  
Elizabeth City, NC 27909

Dear Mr. Parrish:

In early November 1998, we received a call from an employee of Williams Farms of North Carolina, Inc. The employee claimed that pregnant sows at the Belcross Farm division at 409 East Highway 158 in Belcross, N.C., were routinely and cruelly beaten by employees with metal gate rods and other instruments. Our investigation into this farm shows that this is accurate. The employee who called us about the treatment of animals at Belcross, had also complained to [Redacted], veterinarian and general manager of Williams Farms of North Carolina, Inc., to ask for remedial intervention. We are presenting to you today the findings of our investigation, including videotaped evidence of what we believe are repeated unlawful activities at Belcross Farms. We trust that your office will prosecute all those responsible for these acts of cruelty.

People are guilty of violating North Carolina's Cruelty to Animals Statute, §14-360, if they "(a)... intentionally overdrive, overload, wound, injure, torment, kill, or deprive of necessary sustenance, or cause or procure to be overdriven, overloaded, wounded, injured, tormented, killed, or deprived of necessary sustenance any animal, every such offender shall for every such offense be guilty of a class 1 misdemeanor"; or if they "... maliciously torture, mutilate, maim, cruelly beat, disfigure, poison, or kill, or cause or procure to be tortured, mutilated, maimed, cruelly beaten, disfigured, poisoned, or killed, any animal." Every such offense is a class 1 felony.

The statute does not apply to "lawful activities ... for purposes of production of livestock or poultry." As you will see, the behavior of Belcross employees does not remotely relate to lawful activities. In fact, it clearly violates the statute's prohibition on malicious torture, mutilation, maiming, and cruel beatings and killings.

We have enclosed five videotapes. The tape labeled, "Videotape for Experts' Review," should be used in conjunction with the expert statements we have enclosed. The scenes on this tape are not in the same order as those on the other tapes that contain scenes specific to each individual employee, for your convenience. The videos for individual employees show both excerpted and full scenes, also for your convenience. Below are our complaints against these employees, by individual, according to scenes shown on the enclosed videotapes:

[Redacted], Breeding Technician

On December 10, 1998, a lame sow, being taken outside to be killed, totally lost her ability to walk and became trapped in the narrow aisle between stalls in the breeding building at Belcross Farm. As she lay there, unable to stand or move on her own, Mr. [Redacted] struck her with a herding cane, 3.5 feet long and weighing approximately 3 pounds. The cane was used on the sow's body at least 90 times, despite the fact that the sow was unable to move on her own. Twelve of the blows were made with significant force. According to Bo Algers, D.V.M., Ph.D., of Cornell University, [Redacted]'s beating of this animal "cause[d] unnecessary and unjustifiable pain and suffering to the sow."

[Redacted] continued to beat the sow although she was unable to move. Instead of physically moving her by pushing and pulling (which, as can be seen in the videotape after the beatings, accomplished the goal of moving the sow outside), or killing her instantly with a captive-bolt gun where she lay (as experts recommended), [Redacted] unleashed his frustrations using the cane in his hand, thus violating §14-360 through his "malicious torture" and "cruel beating" of the sow.

Once outside, [Redacted] partially cut the sow's throat with a 1.75-centimeter razor blade, which, according to Dr. Algers, was not suitable for the task and was designed to castrate week-old piglets. Livestock veterinarian Holly Cheever wrote about the sow's condition after [Redacted] slit her throat: "[She] shows several examples of conscious awareness: her head moves slightly in response to noise and movements of the humans, her eyes are blinking in a conscious fashion, she performs a low vocalization, she pricks her ears as a man walks in front of her and in response to a helicopter sound as well as to several other slight auditory stimuli." [Redacted]'s behavior toward this sow was malicious mutilation. Experts agree that a captive-bolt stunner should be used before bleeding. The sow was eventually shot with a captive-bolt gun minutes later, as can be seen on the video.

The blade wound in the sow's neck was not deep or wide enough to cause death in a timely manner. The sow remained fully conscious as she slowly bled for approximately 15 minutes before being shot. The signs of consciousness in the sow were eye blinking, breathing, vocalization, and head and leg movement. The incident was a violation of §14-360, i.e., malicious "torture," "mutilation," and "disfigurement" of a fully conscious sow and inflicting "unjustifiable pain and suffering" upon her.

[Redacted], Farm Manager

On December 17 and 18, 1998, the PETA investigator videotaped a sow who had, according to other employees, been "downed" for almost one month, unable to reach food and water for much of that time. Although he was not charged with caring for this sow, our investigator placed food directly before her and squirted water into her mouth whenever he had the opportunity. Otherwise, she was left in a prone position unable to eat or drink. In the videotape of both days, the sow can be seen to be emaciated and unable to move as other pigs

stepped on her in a crowded pen. As farm manager, [Redacted] failed his responsibility to alleviate this animal's suffering and thus violated §14-360's prohibition on malicious torture.

On January 16, 1999, Mr. [Redacted] decided to kill, quarter, and butcher a lame sow for a personal supply of meat – an act that violated company policy and therefore had to be conducted covertly. After moving the sow outside, [Redacted] bludgeoned the sow five times on the head with a pipe wrench, 1.5 feet long and weighing approximately 15 pounds. The use of the wrench for bludgeoning resulted in unjustifiable pain and suffering and was cruel and malicious.

After two more blows to the head by [Redacted] (see below), [Redacted] proceeded to cut the sow's throat with a 1.75-centimeter razor blade and initiate the skinning process with the same blade, which, according to experts, was not suitable for the task (it was designed to castrate week-old piglets). Lester Friedlander, D.V.M., wrote: "I counted 25 separate incisions to the neck area in an attempt to bleed the sow." All of the experts who viewed this tape concurred that the process began prematurely, i.e., skinning and quartering occurred before the sow was rendered unconscious or dead. The signs of consciousness were eye blinking, breathing, vocalization, and head and leg movement. Clearly, [Redacted] had no regard for the suffering of the sow and violated §14-360 by "maliciously torturing" and "mutilating" a fully conscious sow. On the videotape, Mr. [Redacted] can be heard after sawing off the sow's rear leg: "Give up bitch already goddamit, this is getting sad."

[Redacted], Assistant Production Manager for Williams Farms of North Carolina, Inc.

On January 12, 1999, Mr. [Redacted] forced an injured sow with a suspected broken shoulder to walk to an incinerator approximately 60 feet from the farrowing building. He then struck the sow with an approximately 4-foot-long metal pole weighing approximately 20 pounds. According to eyewitness testimony, his captive-bolt gun was located in his truck less than 100 yards away. To avoid the minor inconvenience of retrieving the gun, [Redacted] opted to use the metal pole, showing complete disregard for the pain and suffering inflicted on the injured sow. Experts agree that the injured sow should have been killed with a captive-bolt gun where she lay instead of forcing her to walk to the incinerator. Further, they point out that beating her with a metal rod is unacceptable. She is struck at least 4 times by [Redacted] before being hoisted for incineration.

[Redacted]'s actions were malicious and cruel. They resulted in unjustifiable pain and suffering and violated §14-360.

[Redacted], Breeding Technician

On December 10, 1998, a lame sow, being taken outside to be killed, totally lost her ability to walk and became trapped in the narrow aisle between stalls in the breeding building at Belcross Farms. As she lay there, unable to stand or move on her own, Mr. [Redacted] repeatedly kicked her in the head no less than nine times and stomped on her at least 10 times. At one point, [Redacted] maliciously stood on top of the sow and danced on her.

These actions were executed with enough force to wound, injure, and torment the sow. [Redacted] continued his malicious treatment of the animal even though the sow was unable to move. Instead of physically moving her by pushing and pulling (which, as can be seen in the videotape after the beatings, accomplished the goal of moving the sow outside), or killing her instantly with a captive-bolt gun where she lay (as experts recommended), [Redacted] unleashed his frustrations through malicious and cruel beatings of the sow, thus violating §14-360.

On December 22, 1998, [Redacted] can be seen in the videotape moving pregnant sows, one by one, from their individual stalls to another building for gestation. He repeatedly beat the sows with a metal gate rod, approximately 2.5 feet long and weighing approximately 4 pounds, at least 61 times, even though the majority of the sows were willing to exit their stalls before the beatings commenced. The beatings, according to experts who reviewed this scene, were cruel and unjustified. Many opined that the beatings were also malicious. These beatings violated §14-360.

On January 13, 1999, after placing two pregnant sows into a stall designed for a single sow, [Redacted] prodded one of the sows six times with a 3.5-foot-long wooden herding cane, weighing approximately 3 pounds, to provoke her into standing up and then inserted the cane approximately 3 inches into her vagina. After the sow managed to sit down, [Redacted] again prodded her with the cane 10 times in an attempt to make her stand for more penetration. According to Dr. Friedlander, “The potential of injury, as a result of such actions is very high. The use of a foreign object, which is not sterile, introduces all types of contaminants. The end result could be abortion, infection, internal hemorrhaging, and central nervous system problems.” Further, both Dr. Friedlander and Dr. Algers opined that the action was malicious and cruel. [Redacted]’ action violated §14-360.

On January 16, 1999, [Redacted], along with [Redacted], decided to kill, quarter, and butcher a lame sow for a personal supply of meat – an act that violated company policy and therefore had to be conducted covertly. After moving the sow outside, [Redacted] bludgeoned the sow two times on the head with a pipe wrench, 1.5 feet long and weighing approximately 15 pounds. The use of the wrench for bludgeoning resulted in unjustifiable pain and suffering and was cruel and malicious.

[Redacted] continued the skinning process with a 1.75-centimeter razor blade, which, according to experts, was not suitable for the task (it was designed to castrate week-old piglets). All of the experts concurred that the process began prematurely, i.e., skinning and quartering occurred before the sow was rendered unconscious or dead. The signs of consciousness were eye blinking, breathing, vocalization, and head and leg movement. Clearly, [Redacted] had no regard for the suffering of the sow and violated §14-360 by “maliciously torturing” and “mutilating” a fully conscious sow.

We respectfully ask that you carefully review the enclosed materials and charge the above individuals with the appropriate number of felony counts for their violations of the state animal cruelty statute. We have enclosed copies of all expert statements with cover pages describing the scenes they reviewed. Please note the difference in tape labeling on Dr.

Algers' comments. His tape was labeled, "Pig Processing Facility Investigation," while other identical tapes were labeled, "Pig Breeding Facility Investigation."

We also wish to inform you that two Belcross employees, [Redacted] and [Redacted], made specific threats of violence against PETA, its employees and property, while our investigator was at Belcross. PETA's outside counsel, Huff, Poole and Mahoney, has served these employees with letters today, letting them know we are aware of their threats. We have also notified local police and the postal authorities since one of the employees threatened to send a letter bomb to PETA's office.

Our investigator is available for an interview with you at any time. In the meanwhile, please contact us with any questions. I can be reached at 757-622-7382, extension 334. We look forward to your response and thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mary Beth Sweetland, Director  
Research, Investigations & Rescue Department

enclosures:

videotapes of incidents occurring at Belcross Farm

expert comments from: Bo Algers, D.V.M., Ph.D., Cornell University  
John Benson, D.V.M., Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Holly Cheever, D.V.M., Voorheesville, NY  
Lester Friedlander, D.V.M., former USDA inspector  
Diane Halverson – Farm Animal Consultant  
Kerry Levin-Smith, D.V.M. – Ukiah, Calif.