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## National Dairy FARM Program: Farmers Assuring Responsible Management

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### FARM Program Protocol Following Allegations of Willful Mistreatment of Animals

The National Dairy FARM Program™ (FARM Program) takes seriously all allegations of ***willful mistreatment of animals***. The FARM Program has established this protocol to investigate credible evidence to determine if ***willful mistreatment of animals*** has occurred, and if necessary, to place a participating farm on probation. Finally, this protocol establishes procedures, including successful implementation of an animal care improvement plan, to reinstate the participant in the FARM program. The focus of this process is to ensure a farm's practices are consistent with the program's guidelines – not to exclude the farm from future participation in the FARM Program.

The FARM Program will place a participating farm on probation “if willful mistreatment of animals is observed at any time” (*FARM Animal Care Reference Manual, page 47*). ***Willful mistreatment of animals*** is defined as follows by the FARM Program (*FARM Animal Care Reference Manual, page 8*):

*“Acts that maliciously cause pain, injury or suffering including, but not limited to: needlessly applying any type of prod to a sensitive part of an animal (prods are only used when animal or human safety is in jeopardy, and as a last resort), malicious hitting or beating of an animal, movement of non-ambulatory cattle in a manner inconsistent with the National Dairy FARM Program guidelines, prolonged lack of access to feed and water, and inappropriate on-farm harvest or euthanasia.”*

#### **Investigation**

Upon receiving credible evidence of ***willful mistreatment of animals***, the FARM Program will contact the program participant and the cooperative or proprietary processor they are affiliated with to discuss the allegation. Additionally, the FARM Program may conduct a third-party on-site audit or on-farm investigation of alleged animal care issues. The FARM Program will use all information from the credible evidence, discussions with parties involved, and the third-party on-site audit to determine if ***willful mistreatment of animals*** occurred.

### **Probation**

Upon conclusion of the investigation, if it is determined that ***willful mistreatment of animals*** occurred a farm will be placed on probation. If a farm is placed on probation both the farm and the cooperative or proprietary processor they are affiliated with will be notified by letter. The letter will explain the basis for the action, and will also detail the process to enable reinstatement in the FARM Program.

### **Reinstatement**

To be reinstated in the FARM Program the farm must do the following:

- Take immediate action to discipline any employees found to have engaged in ***willful mistreatment of animals***;
- Re-train all employees involved in animal care on the proper handling of animals;
- Conduct an on-farm audit by an independent third-party auditor utilizing the FARM Program or another industry recognized audit, such as the Validus Dairy On-Farm Animal Welfare Audit (NOTE – the FARM Program third-party on-site verification may qualify);
- Create an Animal Care Improvement Plan with the third-party auditor that outlines the steps to be taken to address any deficiencies identified in the audit and a clear timeline for addressing any issues found (NOTE – an Improvement Plan may be developed in conjunction with the FARM Program third-party on-site verification);
- Re-evaluation by a FARM Program Second-Party Evaluator after 60-90 days with demonstration of timely progress on items detailed in the Improvement Plan. With successful completion of the re-evaluation, the farm will be provisionally allowed back into the FARM Program; and
- A final follow-up evaluation, based on the timeline for completion of the Improvement Plan items, must take place, no later than a year after the re-evaluation, for complete reinstatement in the program.
- Failure to implement the items in the Improvement Plan will result in the removal of the farm from the FARM Program.

The FARM Program has developed a number of resources that can be used to meet the program's guidelines. These resources include videos describing the Animal Care Manual chapters in English and Spanish, sample Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for actions such as moving non-ambulatory animals and a sample herd health plan. These and other materials can be found on the FARM secure website as well as the public website, [www.nationaldairyfarm.com](http://www.nationaldairyfarm.com).