

Nebraska pig supplier promises to investigate alleged abuses

May 26 2016, by Grant Schulte

A national pork supplier promised Thursday to investigate abuse allegations at one of its Nebraska facilities after an animal rights group released an undercover video showing pigs with open wounds and other health problems.

The Animal Legal Defense Fund released the footage Wednesday and sent letters to the Nebraska and Illinois attorney general's offices requesting a [criminal investigation](#). The facility is owned by The Maschhoffs, the largest family-owned pork production business in North America, which is based in Carlyle, Illinois.

The video allegedly shows pigs with maladies such as intestinal ruptures, large open wounds and baseball-sized cysts. At one point, a person is shown slamming a piglet's head into the floor to try to kill it. The group said its undercover investigator documented long stretches of time—up to three days—where pigs received no food, leading them to become agitated and hurting each other and themselves.

"Conscious consumers who are looking to support more responsible businesses are deceived by companies, such as The Maschhoffs, that misrepresent themselves with false idyllic words and images rather than developing a better business model," said Animal Legal Defense Fund Executive Director Stephen Wells.

The Maschhoffs said in a statement Thursday it will act immediately to address the allegations and will cooperate with any criminal

investigation. Hormel Foods, one of its largest customers, said it has suspended all sow operations at the plant and is sending auditors to see whether animal care requirements are being followed.

"As a family-owned, long-standing hog production company, we recognize our ethical obligation to provide for the wellbeing and human care of our animals as do our customers," said Bradley Wolter, president of The Maschhoffs.

The Maschhoffs and the Animal Legal Defense Fund both declined to reveal the facility's exact location. A spokesman for The Maschhoffs said the company didn't want to endanger employees at the plant, and an attorney for the Animal Legal Defense Fund said his group was concerned that its undercover investigator might be identified.

A spokeswoman for Nebraska Attorney General Doug Peterson declined to comment and wouldn't confirm whether that office has opened an investigation.

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