

Mourning 18,000 Cows and An Injured Employee Trapped and Exploded in a Massive Dairy CAFO

The Texas state fire marshal’s office is investigating the death of 18,000 confined dairy cows, unable to escape an explosion and fire. One trapped woman was rescued from a building and airlifted to a Lubbock hospital 80-miles from the Dimmitt CAFO for treatment. Read the news accounts around the country that expose one of the horrors of the CAFO system:

"The speculation was probably what they call a honey badger, which is a vacuum that sucks the manure and water out and possibly that it got overheated and probably the methane and things like that ignited and spread out and exploded and the fire," Rivera told local outlet KSAT."

<https://www.foxnews.com/us/texas-dairy-explosion-leaves-least-18000-cattle-dead-person-critically-injured>, **Texas dairy explosion leaves at least 18,000 cattle dead, 1 person critically injured** by Sarah Rumpf-Whitten | Fox News

“The 18,000 cows killed represent just a fraction of the 625,000 dairy cows in Texas. Including beef cows, there are 13 million in the state, according to the Texas Almanac. Large amounts of cattle have died in Texas before. During Winter Storm Goliath in 2015, 35,000 cattle froze to death.” <https://www.texastribune.org/2023/04/13/texas-dairy-farm-explosion-cows/> **More than 18,000 cows are dead after dairy farm explosion in Texas Panhandle** by Jayme Lozano-Carver and Erin Douglas April 13, 2023

“Nearly three million farm animals died in fires across the US between 2018 and 2021.” <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-65258108>, **Texas dairy farm explosion kills 18,000 cows**, by Bernd Debusmann Jr, BBC News, Washington

“The fire in Castro County spread quickly through holding pens where the cows were trapped. Most of them – a mix of Holstein and Jersey cows – were waiting to be milked.

The cows were valued at about \$2,000 apiece,’ said County Judge Mandy Gfeller, the county's top executive. Total financial losses could reach tens of millions of dollars, she said, not including destruction of equipment and buildings.

Based on the size of an average adult cow, 18,000 cattle standing 3 to 4 feet apart could cover 26 football fields.” <https://www.usatoday.com/story/graphics/2023/04/14/18-000-cows-killed-dairy-farm-fire-texas/11657909002/> **18,000 cows – enough to cover 26 football fields – killed in devastating Texas dairy farm fire** by Stephen J. Beard and Janet Loehrke | USA TODAY

“Typically, dead farm animals – even scores of them, such as those killed in the wake of hurricanes or blizzards – can be buried, hauled to landfills or even composted, said Saqib

Mukhtar, an associate dean at the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension and a cattle disposal expert.

But the sheer number of carcasses in this incident makes the task monumental, he said.

I really don't know, if [the cows] were all intact, how in the world you can manage this even within a month," said Mukhtar, who previously worked at Texas A&M University and helped dispose of thousands of cattle drowned by Hurricane Ike in 2008.

The incident could also draw agents from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, as well as scientists with the Environmental Protection Agency – all monitoring how the dead animals may contaminate soil, air or aquifers, said Andy Vestal, a retired professor and extension specialist at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service who has assisted in large-scale cattle disposal. The efforts are aimed at protecting both humans and livestock, he said.”

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/04/15/disposing-18000-cows-killed-texas-dairy-explosion-fire/11668180002/> **18,000 cows killed in Texas explosion. Next: The massive, messy task of disposing of them** by Rick Jervis | USA TODAY

“It's horrific to think of losing that many cattle all at once,' Jim Magagna, executive vice president of the Wyoming Stock Grower's Association, told Cowboy Daily.

The disaster at a huge dairy farm in Castro County, Texas, is thought to be the largest single cattle killing ever.

Magagna, along with Park County Dairy Farmer Scott George and veteran cattle rancher Dennis Sun, told Cowboy State Daily that there had been a lot of talk about the disaster in their circles, but nobody was certain exactly what caused it. I just don't know, said George, whose family runs the George Farms dairy, with roughly 600 cows, between Cody and Powell.

Large dairies burn methane from cow manure to generate electricity on their farms, George said. However, his family's farm isn't large enough to do that, so such an explosion isn't a concern for them.

A large stash of improperly stored nitrate-based fertilizer also could possibly cause an explosion fire, said Sun, who is publisher of the Wyoming Livestock Roundup.

The construction of some of the buildings on the Texas dairy farm might have played a part, Magagna said. “From what I've read, the insulation in some of the buildings where the cattle were being held caused the fire to spread quickly,” he said.

George said disposing of even one dead cow is daunting enough, so he can't imagine what it will be like trying to handle 18,000 of them. We have to use our front-end loaders to move carcasses, it's not something you can just pick up, he said. It will also depend on

the breed of the cattle. A grown Jersey cow weighs about 1,200 pounds. Holsteins can weigh 1,500-1,800 pounds.”

Then there’s the matter of what to do with a literal mountain of carcasses.

They will have to bury them or burn them. Or, they may have to take them to a landfill and have them composted, George said. “But still, that many carcasses all at once ... oh, my. And taking them to a landfill won’t be cheap, he added.”

<https://cowboystatedaily.com/2023/04/13/18-000-cattle-blown-up-in-texas-a-scale-of-disaster-unlikely-for-wyoming-ranchers/> **18,000 Cattle Blown Up In Texas; Only Event Comparable In Wyoming Was The Blizzard Of 1886 – 1887**, by Mark Heinz, Cowboy State Daily

CAFO Horrors: A “Honey Badger” of a CAFO Horror