



## Explosion at Texas dairy farm kills over 18,000 cows

### Description

An explosion at a dairy farm in Texas on Monday night, April 10, killed over 18,000 cows and critically injured one farm worker.

The incident occurred at the barn of the South Fork Dairy Farm in Dimmitt in the Texas Panhandle region and is the latest incident in a string of so-called accidents since last year that have crippled the country's food production infrastructure.

Castro County officials believe the explosion that caused the fire started from a malfunctioning piece of equipment. The fire then spread to the building where the cattle are hauled before they are brought into the milking area and into a holding pen. Castro County Sheriff Sal Rivera said that was the reason why very few cows survived.

The Texas State Fire Marshal's Office is still investigating the cause of the fire. Rivera noted that what probably made the fire much worse is a "honey badger" incident, wherein a fire in a confined space creates a vacuum that sucks out all of the moisture inside, overheating the area. The methane from the cattle probably also ignited and helped the fire spread out.

Emergency responders only determined the full extent of the damage caused by the fire after it was extinguished and over 18,000 head of cattle were reported as having perished, or nearly three times the number of cattle that are slaughtered in the United States each day.

One dairy farm worker was rescued from inside the structure and was taken to a nearby hospital. As of Tuesday morning, his condition was reported as still critical but stable. No other humans were physically affected by the fire.

"It's mind-boggling," said Dimmitt Mayor Roger Malone. "I don't think it's ever happened before around here. It's a real tragedy."

“There’s some that survived, there’s some that are probably injured to the point where they’ll have to be destroyed,” said Rivera.

The 18,000 cattle that perished represent around 90 percent of the farm’s total herd. The viable survivors were moved to a separate facility managed by the same owner of the South Fork Dairy Farm.

## South Fork Dairy Farm fire deadliest for cattle since 2013

The Animal Welfare Institute, a Washington-based animal advocacy group, noted that this is the biggest single-incident death of cattle in the country since it began tracking barn and farm fires in 2013.

The second-largest single-incident death – a dairy farm fire in upstate New York that consumed 400 cows in 2020 – doesn’t even come close to the death toll of the South Fork Dairy Farm fire.

“This is the deadliest fire involving cattle we know of,” said Allie Granger, a policy associate at the institute. “In the past, we have seen fires involving several hundred cows at a time, but nothing anywhere near this level of mortality.”

With each cow valued roughly at around \$2,000, Castro County Judge Mandy Gfeller said the company that manages South Fork Dairy Farm could be looking at tens of millions of dollars in losses. This doesn’t even take into account the losses incurred from the damaged and burned equipment and buildings.

“You’re looking at a devastating loss,” she said. “My heart goes out to each person involved in that operation.”

Watch this video from Michelle of “Squirrel Tribe” discussing the death of over 18,000 cattle in the Texas dairy farm.

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### Date Created

04/15/2023