

## DECLARATION OF RONALD GESSNER

I hereby swear, certify, and affirm as follows:

1. My name is Ronald Gessner. I am a citizen of Pennsylvania. I am over the age of 18 years and competent to make this declaration. The information set forth in this declaration is based on my personal knowledge of events described herein unless stated otherwise. I can be reached at 570-238-1178 or [saxynor@gmail.com](mailto:saxynor@gmail.com).
2. From late 2008 until early October 2016, I worked at Reitz Dairy Farm (hereinafter, "the farm"), located at 133 Reitz Rd, Shamokin, PA 17872, as a farm hand. My duties involved feeding the cows and doing general field work. I often worked up to 85 hours per week.
3. Throughout the duration of my employment at the farm, cattle manure was not properly disposed of, due to a lack of manpower to appropriately clean the farm, and the farm was covered in a large amount of accumulated feces. Owner Lloyd Reitz and his son Andy never provided cows with adequate bedding, and the cows were forced to lie in feces. Manure often ran out of the cattle barn and into a creek behind the barn. At times, the feces flowed over the driveway that led to the house on the property that I lived in.
4. During my time at the farm, Lloyd and Andy Reitz often refused to provide basic care and licensed veterinary treatment to ill or injured cows. For example, approximately twice per month, cows became stuck in pens in the free-stall barn and would often scrape much of their backs while squeezing under a rail. Lloyd and Andy did not treat the wounds in any way, even when I suggested to them that at least iodine be applied as a disinfectant. The "hospital pen" in the barn had nine headlocks, but at times contained as many as 13 to 15 ill or injured cows, who were forced to fight for access to food. This pen was usually covered in deep feces. The only bedding ever provided in the hospital pen was corn fodder from a field by the heifer barn, where it was baled and left unwrapped and exposed to the elements. This resulted in much of it being wet and mushy by the time it was brought into the barn. In the winter months, this bedding was often covered in snow when put into the barns.
5. During my time at the farm, Lloyd and Andy Reitz slit the necks of fully conscious downed cows, without any prior stunning. This occurred in the "hospital pen" approximately once per month, in full view of the other cows in the pen. The cows would bleed out in the filthy pen, which was not cleaned, and the other cows in the pen were forced to live amid the blood and gore.
6. During my time at the farm, milking staff were not given proper training to detect mastitis, which I estimate afflicts approximately 5 percent of the herd, nor were they properly supervised. Staff did not properly strip the cows' teats before milking, and often would only notice mastitis when large chunks appeared in the milk, at which point the infection is significant.
7. During my time at the farm, the cattle feed bunk was often not properly cleaned, and I often saw maggots in the cattle feed. At night, I often saw cockroaches in the cattle feed, and in the milking parlor. I also routinely saw large rats in these areas.

8. During my time at the farm, old milk tanks were used as cattle water troughs. These were rarely cleaned, and often contained approximately 3 inches of filth in the bottom.

9. During my time at the farm, a 300 gallon tank of formaldehyde was kept in the feed bunk where the hospital cows ate. The fumes around the tank caused cows to sneeze. A 5 gallon bucket that was used to remove formaldehyde from the larger tank was often left within reach of the cows, and I saw them licking the bucket on several occasions.

10. During my time at the farm, approximately once per week I saw Lloyd Reitz electroshock downed cows inside their ears.

11. During my time at the farm, calves were kept in sheds that were dilapidated and falling apart. Throughout the duration of my employment, Lloyd Reitz stored bags of powdered detergent in the back of one of these sheds. Reitz did not properly block the calves' access to these bags, and the calves ingested the detergent.

12. During my time at the farm, equipment was kept in unsafe, shoddy condition, including conveyor belts in the milking parlor that had no shields, and tractors from the 1970s that often broke down and were repaired with other old, shoddy pieces. For the past several years, agitators on two of the three milk tanks on the farm leaked gear oil, which ran down the paddle and into the milk. Lloyd and Andy tied a rag around the shaft to sop up the oil, rather than replacing the leaky seals, and the rag often became saturated with oil. No maintenance was done on the equipment that I used other than what I was able to do myself. Additionally, the only bathroom available for staff was a filthy, outdated outhouse, which had a tree growing in front of it that only allowed the door to be opened a maximum of twelve inches. I often complained about my animal welfare concerns, the equipment, and other issues that I saw on the farm, but my concerns were at times laughed at by Lloyd and Andy Reitz, who told me that that "this [was] how [they] do things."

13. By early October 2016, I was frustrated by the poor quality of care for the animals, the shoddy and unsafe state of the equipment, and the unsanitary conditions for employees of the farm, and I confronted Lloyd and Andy about these issues. I was told to "do it [their] way or leave." I informed them that I was giving two weeks' notice, but was then told to leave, so I did.

14. I hereby attest that the information contained in this affidavit is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

DocuSigned by:  
*Ronald Gessner*  
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Ronald Gessner

Subscribed on this day of 12/1/2016 by Ronald Gessner.