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Dear District Attorney Ramos and the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office:

I applaud your office for its proactive stance in the Westland/Hallmark Meat Company case. Criminal charges filed against former Hallmark workers Daniel Ugarte Navarro and Luis Sanchez are purportedly the nation's first felony charges for animal cruelty at a slaughterplant.

I understand police spotted 11 occurrences of illegal activity in the Humane Society of the United States undercover video. One-time pen manager Navarro faces jail time of eight years and eight months if convicted of five felony and three misdemeanor cruelty counts. Sanchez, Navarro's prior helper, could get three years behind bars for three misdemeanor counts of using machinery to maneuver animals.

But Sanchez may walk away with a slap on the wrist if the DA accepts a plea deal. Public defender Mario Martinez claims his client was "just an employee making \$9 an hour. He was following directions." This is no defense for circumventing animal cruelty laws.

Please do not strike a deal at Sanchez's March 13 hearing. I also urge you to seek maximum penalties for Navarro, when he is arraigned March 24, 2008. Both defendants violated California's animal cruelty and downed animal protection laws. Both should be prosecuted for their transgressions. California's downer law orders incapacitated animals to be humanely euthanized or removed.

Apparently Hallmark management endorses or ignores violent means to force infirm animals to the kill box. As you know, the accused are videotaped electrically prodding the heads, necks, spine and rectums of animals crumpled on concrete. The cows can do little more than blink and moan in response. Navarro is seen paddling a non-ambulatory cow in the face and eye. The animals are dragged in heavy chains and hoisted on forklift prongs, mercilessly rammed and rolled over pavement.

I sincerely hope the DA's ongoing investigation brings charges against Hallmark management as well. Navarro cast previous plant owner Donny Hallmark as the decision-maker, telling Chino police his boss directed him to coerce animals with a forklift or fire concentrated water jets into their nostrils and throats.

I call upon your office to set a strong precedent for prosecuting animal abuse within the livestock industry. Hallmark Meat Packing Company officers and employees need to be held responsible for animal torture.

Thank you,