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Croydon woman sentenced for animal cruelty

NEWPORT — A Croydon woman found guilty of animal cruelty will serve six months in the Sullivan County House of Corrections nine months after 21 chihuahuas and a cat living in poor conditions were removed from a property on Pine Hill Road.

Petrina Newcomb, 48, was charged with 38 counts of animal cruelty last November by Croydon police after a report from the Upper Valley Humane Society led to the discovery of a slew of animals living in atrocious conditions at 315 Pine Hill Road.

Newcomb's 12-month sentence, with six months suspended five years on good behavior, was ordered by Judge Bruce Cardello on Tuesday in the 5th Circuit Court - Newport District Division for one of those charges. Four concurrent 12-month terms at the county jail were suspended five years for four of the other animal cruelty charges. All other charges were nolle prossed, according to the case summary.

The charges will remain suspended on the condition of good behavior, and that Newcomb will not possess any dogs or any more than two other household pets, which shall be spayed or neutered. She will also not be allowed to engage in breeding or selling of animals, according to the case summary.

Additionally, a total of \$8,680 in fines was suspended five years on good behavior as part of the sentence.

According to court documents, the humane society was approached by Lorraine Newcomb, Petrina Newcomb's sister, with a dog that was believed to belong to Petrina Newcomb. Petrina Newcomb told Croydon Police Chief Richard Lee on Nov. 4, 2016 that she had 13 dogs at the residence and that she was ready to surrender the animals, as she was no longer able to take care of them.

Petrina Newcomb reports leaving the home in April 2016. Her ex-husband, Richard Newcomb and their daughter remained in the residence until Richard Newcomb was taken away by ambulance in August 2016. Upon his vacating the home, Petrina Newcomb provided food and water for the dogs, all according to court documents.

When the Animal Rescue League arrived on Nov. 5, 2016 to take custody of the dogs, they actually found that there were 21 dogs and one cat. Six of the dogs were euthanized upon arrival and medical examination, while another was euthanized several days later. The remaining animals received medical treatment which included "multiple teeth extractions, treatment of infections, treatment of a corneal ulcer, and treatment of flea dermatitis," according to court documents.

Following the removal of the animals, Lee executed a search warrant at the residence on Nov. 15, 2016, along with a representative of the Animal Rescue League of New Hampshire. Pictures in the case file reveal trash littered across the floor of the residence to the point where the floor itself wasn't visible, along with a grime-covered bath.

“The defendant subjected 22 animals to inhumane conditions, without medical treatment, and is believed to have bred the dogs to be sold for profit,” the prosecution wrote in its sentencing recommendation.

The defense called for a sentence of 12 months in the house of corrections with all but 30 days suspended, stating that the dogs were not malnourished or dehydrated. It was also argued that Petrina Newcomb “is being held solely responsible for the actions for which her ex-husband is more responsible.”

Until Tuesday's sentencing, Newcomb had never spent any time in jail.

“The defendant disputes that the dogs were subject to inhumane conditions. They were provided with ample space, food and water,” the defense states. “They were seen for [veterinary] care when necessary.”

According to the state's memorandum, this wasn't the first time this had happened. On May 1, 2008, Newcomb and her husband surrendered 14 dogs and eight cats to the Upper Valley Humane Society, and between 2012 and 2016, 80 dogs were surrendered to the humane society. The memo states that all surrendered animals had medical issues, but survived and were adopted out.

“Here, the defendant subjected animals to such inhumane treatment and conditions that a third of the animals needed to be euthanized,” the state continued.