

Bartlett man charged with animal cruelty over truck incident

Daymond Steer

BARTLETT — Police have charged a local man with animal cruelty and reckless driving after he was seen tying a large dog to the back of a pickup truck and forcing the animal to walk behind it along Route 16 in Glen near Story Land. The incident was captured on video.

A minor accident involving two cars also took place behind his truck on Saturday morning. No one was hurt, police said.

Bartlett Police Sgt. Richard Laferriere told the Sun on Monday that he had responded to the crash minutes after it happened at about 10:50 a.m.

He said a woman who was a witness shared video of the accident and the dog-walking incident to the department's Facebook page. She asked the Sun to let her remain anonymous.

On Tuesday, Bartlett Police Chief Christopher Keaton said the truck driver, identified as Steven Illsley, 50, of Bartlett, had been charged with two counts of Class A misdemeanor animal cruelty and one count of reckless driving.

“My agency has zero tolerance for anybody mistreating any animal,” said Keaton.

Keaton said Illsley was given a hand summons and was not taken into custody. Keaton said Tuesday that a warrant was signed Monday and Illsley was arrested that night.

The witness' video shows a large dog walking behind the truck with a collar around its neck. There is another large dog in the bed of the truck. The Story Land sign is seen in the foreground. A car passes the truck and dog. Then a second car enters the frame from behind the truck and dog and slows down. The second car is rear-ended by a third car.

“So, the dogs were not hit by the car,” said Laferriere. “He (Illsley) was not involved in the actual accident. He actually called in the accident. Somebody else called about him.”

“(The video) helps give us the evidence that this matter did happen,” said Laferriere. “So it assists us very much in those types of investigations. And we appreciate people coming forward with that type of information.”

He said the witness saw both dogs get tied to the truck at Story Land and that when the man, later identified as Illsley drove out on Route 16, other drivers passing by honked at him. At that point, Illsley was seen putting one of the dogs in the bed of the truck. Laferriere thinks the dogs were only walked a few hundred feet.

While investigating the accident, Laferriere spoke to llsley and said he told the officer he was just trying to corral his dogs.

Laferriere said both dogs were “big” and the one in the truck bed in the video appeared to be a St. Bernard.

Laferriere believes that the truck driver was endangering the dog.

“It wasn’t being mutilated or tortured. You know, people walk their dogs along the road all the time. It’s just the manner in which it was occurring is negligent,” Laferriere said. “If he slams on his brakes, of course, the dogs aren’t going to know, the dog might walk into the car or if the dog gets loose, he’s (the truck driver) not going to know, because he’s not physically holding it.”

The woman whose car got rear-ended told Laferriere she slowed down because she thought the dog might run into the road. The other driver apparently didn’t notice that the woman slowed down.

Laferriere said Monday the investigation could take a few days and that Keaton would have to sign off on any charges brought forward. Keaton confirmed the charges Tuesday.