

## **Concord Monitor**

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Published: 7/14/2021 5:35:53 PM

After pleading guilty to arson and animal cruelty charges, Christopher Vincent, 44, will serve up to 7 years in jail, Judge Andrew Schulman decided on Thursday.

The animals in question: chickens, who were living in a shed in Concord that Vincent lit to flames in 2018.

“You don’t see many cruelty to chicken cases,” said Schulman. “Maybe I shouldn’t disclose what I had for lunch.”

Vincent will serve a minimum of 3½ and maximum of 7 years for arson and one charge of animal cruelty. In 2016, he set fire to an unoccupied residence in Pittsfield. In 2018, the Concord chicken coop was the victim.

He has already been incarcerated for 526 days, which will be credited to his sentence.

A trial was held for the Pittsfield charges in May. Rather than go to trial on the Concord charges, Vincent pleaded guilty.

Fire spreads quickly and could have resulted in fatalities beyond the animals, Schulman told Vincent.

“What happened to the chickens, not good,” he said. “But this could happen to a family.”

The chickens belonged to Scott and Heather Murray. Their son, who was five at the time of the accident, viewed them as his pets.

“For a 5-year-old, this is a formative experience that might shape how they see the world,” said Schulman. “It’s sad.”

Standing next to his public defender, Vincent slowly broke down into tears as he pleaded guilty to the charges.

“I am sorry for what I’ve done,” he said. “I don’t recall doing these things.”

Vincent disclosed he struggled with substance abuse and mental health problems at the time of his charges. He also said he was not receiving help.

Schulman recommended that the prison screen him for drug and alcohol treatment.

The court’s online services were temporarily down during the trial, which prevented the sentencing forms from being signed.

As security escorted him out of the room, Schulman offered parting words.

“Good luck sir,” he said.