



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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Media Release

From: Michael Terry
Community Relations Specialist, 352-797-3608

Re: Two Brooksville Residents Arrested on 10 Counts of Animal Cruelty

Date: September 1, 2017

On 8-25-17, Hernando County sheriff's deputies responded to 5253 Oney Drive in Brooksville in reference to a report of numerous endangered animals on the property.

Upon arrival, deputies made contact with **Dennis Rodgers, W/M DOB/05-05-67**, who said he was the caretaker for the animals on the property. Rogers said the animals were owned by **Deborah Meinhardt, W/F DOB/06-10-66**.

Rodgers agreed to walk the deputies around the property so they could visually examine each animal.

There were a total of seven horses on the property suffering from various stages of neglect. Deputies noted the water troughs were filled with algae and tadpole infested water. Many of the horses had no feed, hay or grass readily available to eat.

In addition, several of the horses had untreated wounds, overgrown or broken hoofs, and loss of muscle mass.

Deputies also noted the presence of several dogs that were dirty and infested with fleas. The dogs were malnourished and some appeared to have various health issues.

Deputies also located a blue and gold macaw on the front porch living in cage filled with feces and no water. In the same area, they also found two grey squirrels in a small cage.

Rodgers then showed deputies the inside of the home. Deputies noted there was only a small trail to move around the house due to excessive debris found throughout the house, which included animal feces.

The deputies noted the house had strong smell of ammonia, which made their eyes burn and made it hard to breath.

In addition to finding more dogs inside the house, deputies also found three sun conures in one cage and two cats. All appeared to be suffering from neglect.

When the walkthrough was complete, the deputies called for assistance to have all the animals removed from the property. The animals were taken to Hernando County Animal Services.

On Aug. 29, investigators received an official veterinarian report that indicated all seven horses on the property were suffering from neglect. The veterinarian noted all the horses were malnourished and were kept in poor living conditions.

On Aug. 31, deputies returned to 5253 Oney Drive where they arrested Meinhardt and Rogers on a Hernando County warrant charging each of them with 10 counts of **Animal Cruelty**. Their bond was set at \$10,000 apiece.

The Office of Sheriff:

The Office of the Sheriff is established by the Florida Constitution. As a constitutional officer, the Sheriff has the exclusive authority to administer his or her agency and is responsible for preserving the peace throughout the entire county, carrying out the laws of the state, the orders of Florida courts, and the ordinances of the Board of County Commissioners. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement and correctional officer of the county.

Sheriff Al Nienhuis was initially appointed as the Sheriff of Hernando County by the Governor in January of 2011. He was then elected by the people of Hernando County in 2012, and remains accountable to them.