



## Hernando County Sheriff's Office

P.O. BOX 10070 – BROOKSVILLE, FL 34603-0070 FAX 352 796-0493 PHONE 352 754-6830

### Media Release

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

**Re:** Weeki Wachee Woman to Face 36 Counts of Animal Cruelty/Neglect

**Date:** May 25, 2018

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On 5-13-18, an HCSO Animal Enforcement Officer responded to 12475 Kildeer Road, Weeki Wachee, to conduct an annual kennel inspection on the grounds of a local animal sanctuary.

Upon arrival, AEO Linda Christian met with the owner, **Lori Watts W/F DOB/03-13-1967**.

Watts allowed AEO Christian and deputies to have access to the property to conduct the inspection.

During the kennel check, AEO Christian noted several violations including inadequate shelter, water and physical care for the 36 dogs, mostly shepherds, found on the property.

Several of the dogs had injuries to their ears which required veterinary treatment.

Other dogs were secured in pens that were too small, had limited access to food and drinking water, and were filled with a combination of mud, feces and urine.

AEO Christian gave Watts 48 hours to fix the violations, in addition to having all the dogs seen by a veterinarian.

On 5-14-18, a local veterinarian responded to the scene and determined several of the dogs were suffering for minor ailments, which could have been treated. The veterinarian determined, due to the lack of treatment, that Watts contributed to the neglect of the dogs.

On 5-16-18, AEO Christian returned to conduct a follow-up inspection.

Once again Watts allowed law enforcement onto her property to conduct a follow-up inspection.

AEO Christian determined Watts had not made satisfactory progress in addressing issues concerning the kennels. She noted many of the kennels still contained feces that was covered by dirt, rather than being removed.

In addition to checking on the wellbeing of the dogs, AEO Christian also checked on the wellbeing of 46 equine (horses, mules and minis), three pigs, six cats and a flock of roosters and chickens also found on the property.

AEO Christian noted those animals were found in better condition than the dogs, but still had concerns for their health.

Deputies proceeded to remove the dogs from the sanctuary and take them to Animal Services.

Watts will be charged with 36 counts of animal cruelty/neglect pertaining to the care of the dogs.

During a fitness petition hearing, County Judge Kurt Hitzemann ordered that all of the animals be removed from Watts' property and turned over to Hernando County.

On 5-25-18, all of the remaining animals were removed from Watts' property and taken to the Hernando County Fairgrounds in Brooksville where various animal rescues are helping to care for the animals.

Once all the animals have been treated and evaluated, the plan is to put them up for adoption.

Anyone wishing to make donations to help support the care of the animals may contact Hernando County Animal Services at (352) 796-5062.

#### **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.**