



## Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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### Media Release

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**From:** Denise M. Moloney  
Community/Media Relations Manager, 352-797-3609

**Re:** Update #1 - Deputies Investigating Animal Cruelty and Abuse Case

**Date:** October 16, 2019

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#### **Update #1**

All of the dogs have been examined by the veterinarian at Hernando County Animal Services (HCAS). As per the veterinarian, all of the dogs are in fairly decent condition. The veterinarian does not believe the dogs had been abandoned (in the storage unit) for an extended period of time, based on their current health condition(s).

The owner of the storage facility is not facing any charges. He has been most cooperative with the investigation. The owner of the facility confirmed that the unit where the dogs were located was supposed to be vacant; the unit was not currently under contract with anyone.

If any media outlets wish to obtain photos and/or video of the dogs (at HCAS), it is strongly recommended that this be done today, as the staff at HCAS is attempting to place each of the dogs in rescues.

Deputies are already receiving tips on this case, based on the photos and information released on 10-15-19. We are currently following up on each and every lead.

If anyone has any information regarding the owner of these dogs, please contact **Deputy Steve George** at the Hernando County Sheriff's Office at 352-754-6830.

If you have information and would like to remain anonymous – Please call Hernando County Crime Stoppers at 1-866-990-TIPS (8477) or submit your tip via the internet at <http://www.hernandocountycrimestoppers.com> . You will remain anonymous and also be eligible for a reward up to \$3,000 cash!

## Original Information – 10-15-19

On 10-15-19 just before 11:30 a.m., an anonymous caller contacted the Hernando County Sheriff's Office to report possible animal abandonment.

The caller stated that animals, possibly dogs, were being kept in a storage unit in the area of Hale Avenue and Dr. MLK Jr. Boulevard in the City of Brooksville.

Preliminary investigation revealed a self-storage facility to be located at 1000 Hale Avenue in Brooksville. An Animal Enforcement Officer (AEO) was dispatched to that location in an effort to locate the animals.

Upon arrival, AEO Mandy Rowe was able to locate a unit, in the back of the facility, that contained barking dogs. AEO Rowe observed a very large pad-lock securing the door to the unit and requested bolt cutters in order to gain access to the dogs.

A patrol sergeant responded to the scene with bolt cutters. A patrol deputy was dispatched to handle the call, which was now a criminal case, as opposed to an "animal complaint."

Once the large pad-lock was cut from the door, deputies located seven dogs inside the unit. One white dog (male) was tethered to a very short leash. There was a bowl of water nearby. Two Chihuahuas were in a metal crate, on top of another metal crate. There was no food or water for the Chihuahuas. In the other metal crate was a mother dog and three small puppies (between six and eight weeks old). Again, there was no food or water for the mother and puppies. Additionally, there was absolutely no ventilation in the storage unit.

All dogs were removed from the storage unit and taken to Hernando County Animal Services to be evaluated by the veterinarian.

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### 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, ran unopposed in 2016, and remains accountable to them.