



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
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Re: Suspected Animal Cruelty Triggers Search Warrant

Date: June 24, 2021

Having received numerous complaints regarding possible animal neglect at 27003 Rochelle Road in Brooksville, HCSO Animal Enforcement Officers (AEOs) attempted to maintain close contact with the animal owner, Jessica Wilson, in order to monitor the condition of her animals.

Over the course of the investigation, it became clear that Wilson either was failing to follow veterinary care instruction or was purposely neglecting her animals. The animals in question are four adult horses and most recently a foal.

In the early stages of the investigation, Wilson was minimally cooperative. Wilson did maintain sporadic contact with the Animal Enforcement Officer assigned to the case and did have her veterinarian, Dr. Sarah Quatman, come to the property to provide veterinary care.

As the investigation progressed, Wilson became uncooperative, refusing to speak with AEOs and refusing to allow them onto her property. During this time, the condition of all four adult horses continued to deteriorate. Once the foal was born on the property, it was never observed to walk and/or thrive.

AEOs made contact with Dr. Quatman to obtain a status update on the condition of the horses. During this contact, it was learned that Quatman had not been to the Wilson property or treated any of the horses for approximately eight weeks.

Once it was discovered the horses had not received any medical care for at least eight weeks, Deputy Laurel Gray obtained a search warrant for Wilson's property.

On 06-24-21 at approximately 8:30 a.m., Deputies along with AEOs and a contracted Equine Veterinarian responded to 27003 Rochelle Road to execute the search warrant.

Upon arrival, three adult horses were located on the property. All three were in various stages of malnourishment. The fourth horse, believed to have recently died, was not located. The foal and a small puppy (both approximately eight weeks old) were found in a shallow grave on the property.

Based on the evaluation by the veterinarian, the three adult horses have been neglected to the point of meeting criminal animal cruelty. The horses were seized by the HCSO and transported to a rescue for immediate treatment.

The foal and the puppy were collected and transported to the University of Florida, College of Veterinary Medicine, for further examination to determine cause of death.

A court hearing has been set to determine if Jessica Wilson is fit to own animals in the state of Florida.

At this time, Wilson faces at least three counts of Criminal Animal Cruelty with the potential of more charges to follow.

Unfortunately, Wilson was not on scene during the execution of the search warrant.

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 was re-elected in 2020. Sheriff Nienhuis remains accountable to the people of Hernando County.