

Woman guilty of animal cruelty allowed to keep horses

By **Elizabeth Dinan**

edinan@seacoastonline.com

August 05, 2009 12:15 PM

BRENTWOOD — A Greenland woman was found guilty of animal cruelty for the third time, given a suspended jail sentence and is being allowed to keep her horses.

Carol Pugh, 53, of 685 Portsmouth Ave., pleaded guilty in Rockingham County Superior Court on Monday to a misdemeanor count of cruelty to an animal. As part of a plea deal with the prosecution, the charge was reduced from a felony.



The conviction resulted from Pugh's May 17, 2008 arrest when police said she "repeatedly" struck her Bernese Mountain dog in the face and kicked it in the ribs while it cowered and yelped. A witness said Pugh was angry at the dog because it ran off and she "repeatedly struck" and "continued to hit" the animal in the face with an open hand and closed fist.

As she hit the dog, according to police reports, Pugh was "swearing and screaming." According to the witness, she asked Pugh to stop, at which point Pugh kicked the dog in the ribs.

Greenland police charged her with a felony because she was previously found guilty of animal cruelty for beating a horse named "Honey" in the neck with her fist eight times on April 29, 1997. She was convicted of her second animal cruelty charge for holding "a grey and white dog" against a building and striking it four times in the chest, also on April 29, 1997.

County Attorney Jim Reams said because Pugh's animals were not taken from her following her latest arrest, "it effectively tied my hands on the animal possession issue." Noting there have been no subsequent incidents, Reams said his office placed a number of conditions in place to "structure protection for the animals."

Pugh was sentenced to serve a year in jail and prohibited from owning animals, but the jail time and animal prohibition are suspended, providing she adhere to the following conditions for a period of two years:

- * Her "meaningful participation and successful completion" of an anger management course.
- * Completion of a NH Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals course on "the proper handling and training of domestic animals."
- * Proof of compliance within 30 days prior to the expiration of the suspension period.

Pugh was also fined \$500.

Reams said Pugh gave the mountain dog to someone and now owns only horses.

Steven Sprowl, manager of the NHSPCA Field Services Division, said he is "appalled at the outcome of this case."

"She was charged with two counts of animal cruelty for hitting a horse and a dog several years ago and she never learned from that experience," he said. "That's why New Hampshire has made it a felony for second offenses. For a court prosecutor to just ignore her past record and let her off easy and retain her animals is just appalling to me."

Sprowl said he received a call from a prosecutor a couple weeks ago inquiring about the agency's thoughts about a plea deal.

"I told him if it allows her to keep her animals, it should go to a full trial and at that time, he told me it probably would," he said. "I cannot fathom why the prosecutor in this case wanted to make a plea arrangement instead of taking it to trial with two very good witnesses that were going to testify against Pugh and leave it up to the judge after the conviction to determine the outcome of the animals."

Sprowl said he believes Pugh "learned nothing."

"She can still beat her animals and most likely, nothing will become of it," he said. "What a shame for the animals in her care and custody."