

Woman to stand trial on animal cruelty charges related to alleged mistreatment of horses

Allegations against Laura Kipp, 36, waived following preliminary hearing before Kittanning MDJ James H. Owen

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An Allegheny County woman will stand trial in the Armstrong County Court of Common Pleas on multiple charges of animal cruelty related to her alleged mistreatment of horses.

Laura Martha Kipp, 36, of Lawrenceville, faces charges of aggravated cruelty to animals: necessary sustenance — a third-degree felony; aggravated cruelty to animals: torture — a third-degree felony; aggravated cruelty to animals: abandonment — a third-degree felony; cruelty to animals: abandonment — a second-degree misdemeanor; neglect of animal: necessary sustenance and potable water — a third-degree misdemeanor; and neglect of animal: shelter — a summary offense, according to a criminal complaint, filed in conjunction with an affidavit of probable cause, by Humane Police Officer Chris Jirak O'Donnell.

Those allegations were waived to the county court of common pleas following a preliminary hearing held Wednesday before Kittanning Magisterial District Judge James H. Owen.

According to the affidavit, HPO O'Donnell received a complaint on Feb. 14, 2021, of horses with no shelter at a property owned by Kipp in Sugarcreek Township.

On Feb. 26, 2021, HPO O'Donnell witnessed seven equines: two without shelter and one underweight, on the property, court papers state, at which time she mandated veterinary care and shelter for the animals.

Kipp reported on May 15, 2021, that all horses were sheltered at the property, according to the affidavit, and on that date a veterinarian also required for one horse and a pony.

On Sept. 15, 2021, HPO O'Donnell visited Kipp's property and found horses without water, court papers state, and some were underweight, especially Cooper, a new golden-colored equine. On that date HPO O'Donnell again mandated veterinary care, according to the affidavit.

HPO O'Donnell received a complaint on Oct. 21, 2021, that Kipp had moved and abandoned the animals, court papers state.

On Nov. 2, 2021, HPO O'Donnell received photographs of Cooper in which the animal appeared to have lost even more weight since Sept. 15, according to the affidavit.

HPO O'Donnell on Nov. 3, 2021, witnessed Cooper with a critically low body condition score, other horses at the property exhibiting eye discharge, rain rot and signs of parasites, at which time she required veterinary care for the horses, especially Cooper, court papers state.

On Nov. 5, 2021, Kipp allegedly moved six horses from Armstrong County, at which time HPO O'Donnell contacted Tioga County HSPO, Krystal Knecht, to monitor Kipp's animals, according to the affidavit.

Throughout the course of the investigation, HSPO Knecht witnessed a lack of shelter for horses and inconsistent provision of hay and expressed her concerns about such matters with Kipp, court papers state.

On Nov. 9, 2021, a veterinarian examined the horses and discussed with Kipp Cooper's feeding regimen and weight, according to the affidavit.

Knecht found Cooper deceased on Nov. 27, 2021, court papers state, and Kipp surrendered the animal and possession of the horse was acquired, court papers state.

On Jan. 19, 2022, a Pennsylvania Animal Diagnostic Laboratory System report indicated the cause and manner of death for Cooper to be emaciation due to malnutrition, underfeeding, or lack of access to feed, according to the affidavit.

At that time, HPSO Knecht continued to monitor and witnessed animals without hay, court papers state.

On Jan. 25, 2022, due to the critical condition of the stud on the property, Knecht removed the stud, with the condition of the three remaining horses still of concern, according to the affidavit.

On March 30, 2022, HPO O'Donnell received a letter from the Tioga County District Attorney's Office to take full prosecution of charges of animal cruelty against Kipp, including those occurring in Tioga County.

The date of the next scheduled court action involving Kipp was not available as of the paper's production deadline.

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