

A dog's life

De Soto man is collared for pitching pup off bridge

By Tim Rowden
Staff writer

Every dog has his day.

Bungee had his day in court Dec. 23.

The male collie-golden retriever mix was injured May 28 when the dog was thrown from a rural De Soto bridge approximately 30 to 40 feet to the rocks and gravel below.

Robert Dale Christian, 21, De Soto, pleaded guilty Dec. 23 to abusing the dog and was sentenced to a suspended sentence of 30 days in jail, a \$500 fine and two years probation.

Animal abuse is a misdemeanor, punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

Christian was charged Aug. 20 in connection with the May 28 incident in which Christian and Jacob Coffee, 22, Crystal City, were seen throwing Bungee off the bridge.

The dog was suffering from shock when it was rescued by Jefferson County animal control officers and was treated by a veterinarian for multiple bruises and internal bleeding.

Bungee was placed with the Jefferson County Humane Society for rehabilitation and treatment and since has been adopted.

Coffee also is charged with animal cruelty and is wanted on a warrant for failure to appear in court to answer to the charge.

Jean Woolery, director of the Humane Society, said the injuries to Bungee were more than physical.

"It took me close to a month

just to be able to pick him up," Woolery said. "He would just freeze when I held him. He just knew that he would be thrown. After a period of about two months, he turned around and licked my face. I knew then that I had to let him go. It was hard. It takes time. It takes energy to do all this. Hopefully we can deter individuals from doing this so these kinds of things won't happen.

"This was a very cruel and insensitive act," Woolery said. "I guess people have to be shown that laws have to be obeyed and this type of abuse will not be accepted. It's very heartless and very insensitive.

If people don't want a dog, they should take it to animal control or take it to the Humane Society. You don't take it out to a bridge and expect it to survive a 40-foot fall. It was just amazing that he even survived."

Assistant prosecuting attorney Mike Lowery said animal cruelty cases that find their way to the prosecutor's office are rare.

"We probably have about four pending right now. To my recollection that's the most I've seen since I've been here," Lowery said. "I have not seen that many reports on it, to be quite honest. There just aren't that many cases that are reported."

To report animal abuse or neglect, call the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department at 797-5000, animal control at 797-5577 or the Humane Society at 836-7585.



Bungee has been adopted and enjoys a happy home.

NEWS

Wanted: Foster 'parents' for pets

BY JOE HARRIS
STAFF WRITER

Abused women in Jefferson County are getting some support from an unusual place, the Humane Society.

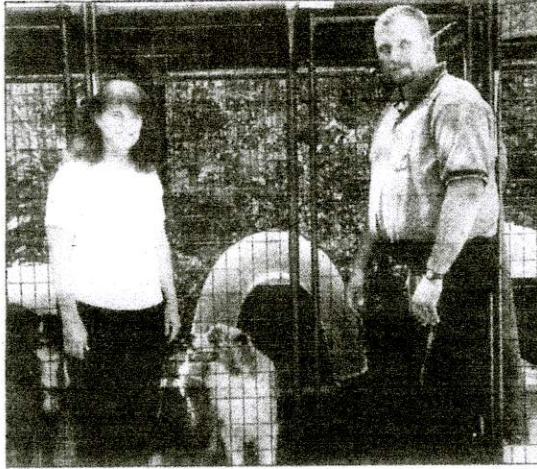
The Humane Society has started a program to assist the pets of women who must leave their homes because of domestic violence. Jean Woolery, Humane Society director, has wanted to start the program for several years, but has had to concentrate her efforts on animal control until recently.

"We do get calls from women who want to leave their homes but don't want to leave their pets behind," Woolery said. "We encourage them to find a family member if possible, but it is hard to find a family member to take in cats or dogs."

Many abuse shelters do not allow pets. Several women who have called the Humane Society's hotline have indicated that they would not leave their dangerous domestic situations without their pets.

Woolery said that in many cases, the pets are being abused as well.

"I've seen situations where a dog has been beaten up, kicked or killed because of violence in the home," Woolery said. "Evidence does show, that if a dog is being abused, then something is going on in the people's relationship too."



Jean Woolery, director of the Jefferson County Humane Society, and Jim Wilcox, Jefferson County animal control manager, stand next to three of the five dog igloos donated to Animal Control by the Humane Society.

The Humane Society will take pets from an abusive situation on a temporary basis only. Pet owners are required to sign documents stating that they will pick up the pet once they are back in a stable situation.

Once the Humane Society takes in a pet, the animal is fully vaccinated, checked for any diseases and is eventually placed in a foster home.

Woolery expects the program to take its toll on the Humane Society's resources and she is asking for the public's help to support the program. The Humane Society needs both cash donations and volunteers who are willing to become "foster owners" for the pets. Cash donations can be sent to the Humane Society, P.O. Box 475, Fenton, Mo. 63026.

Becoming a foster home involves more of a commitment.

"We are looking for somebody who is home during the day, somebody who has fostered before or maybe somebody who recently lost a pet through death and is looking to help another animal," Woolery said.

Humane Society officials visit every prospective foster home to make sure it is suitable. Foster owners cannot have too many time restrictions and need plenty of patience.

"We don't know what this animal has been through," Woolery said. "It depends on the health they are in. If you look at domestic violence situations where the money is not there and it hasn't been for proper care, then the animals could be in pretty bad shape."

In other news, the Humane Society recently donated five giant dog igloos to Jefferson County Animal Control in Barnhart. The igloos have been placed in the newly installed outdoor kennel runs. The runs provide housing for dogs impounded by animal control officials.

The igloos cost \$800. The money was raised through private donations and several fundraisers.

"They will be able to keep the same number of animals, but it won't be as crowded," Woolery said.

Woolery said the igloos will help keep dogs isolated from diseases that may exist in the primary building. Visitors can also see the dogs in the outside runs, which could lead to adoption.

New van benefits animal-control agency and animals

Vehicle will allow quicker, better transportation

BY MATTHEW HATHAWAY
Of the Post-Dispatch

Dogs and cats probably don't realize that the long drive to the pound marks the beginning of a bureaucratic process that will end in either adoption or execution. But even if they don't ponder their mortality, they're probably uncomfortable: animal-control vehicles are often cramped and confining, cold in the winter and hot in the summer.

But the ride to the Jefferson County Animal Shelter — the last trip many dogs and cats will ever make — is about to get a lot more agreeable. This week the Jefferson County Humane Society said it had donated to the shelter a three-quarter-ton van that could accommodate several pets at once and keep the animals stored in healthy and climate-controlled conditions.

Jean Woolery, head of the Jefferson County Humane Society, said the donation was possible because of about \$20,000 in gifts from county businesses and residents and what she called "a very generous discount" by the Boemler Chevrolet dealership.

Up until now, animal-control workers have used trucks and smaller vehicles to pick up abandoned pets and shuttle them to the county's animal shelter in Barnhart. But because only a few anim-

"This really is a huge deal; I'm really excited about it. It's better for the animals and it's better for the public."

Jean Woolery, head of the Jefferson County Humane Society

als could be moved at once, it was an inefficient system that often meant too much time was spent driving animals instead of catching them.

"This really is a huge deal; I'm really excited about it," Woolery said. "It's better for the animals, and it's better for the public. Now (animal control) won't have to keep running back to the shelter all the time. There shouldn't be as many complaints from the public because (the animal-control officers) can keep making their rounds."

Woolery said the new van also

could be used to reduce the number of pets euthanized, by transporting animals from the shelter to pet-adoption events.

The van could prove especially valuable, soon. The County Commission is expected to adopt an animal-control ordinance that will probably translate into more work for dogcatchers and catcatchers and their outdated vehicles.

The changes to the county ordinance, last revised in 1992, would include tougher penalties for owners of animals that bite or repeatedly run loose, a requirement to register dangerous dogs and man-

datory spay-neutering and implantation of microchips in dogs and cats reclaimed by owners or adopted from the county's animal shelter.

In the long run, planners hope that the spay-neutering provision would eventually reduce the number of stray animals. But in the short term, the ordinance is expected to translate into more dogs and cats taken into county custody.

Woolery said that the old animal-control vehicles weren't meant to transport animals. She said that for the most part the vehicles were hand-me-down trucks that had been rigged to carry animal cages that didn't always shelter animals from the elements. She said that those vehicles would still be used as backups, when feasible, but that most animals would be transported in relative comfort.

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Swamped!

Small staff, poor facility, owner mentality hamper animal control efforts says director

By **BILL PHELAN**
STAFF WRITER

Journal
9-7-05



ANDREW JANSEN PHOTO

If there is one word to describe Jefferson County Animal Control Director Jim Wilcox and his staff it would be "busy."

As new residents pour into Jefferson County, they bring the family pet along, and in many cases, are clueless about county ordinances governing the care and restraint of dogs and cats.

"We get maybe two or three calls a year from people who say they just moved here and want to know about animal con-

As the number of people moving into Jefferson County increases so does the number of pets. The pens at the Jefferson County Animal Control facility that hold the animals are frequently at double the capacity.

trol," Wilcox said. "People move here and they think it's the country so they just let their dogs run loose."

To address the problem of stray animals, county commissioners passed a new animal control ordinance last December that established an escalating fine structure and legal action for repeat offend-

ers. The law mandates spaying and neutering for dogs and cats caught running loose a second time. The law also provides a definition for dangerous animals.

Wilcox said the new law has helped reduce the number of repeat offenders, but the sheer

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Animals: Small staff, facility hamper efforts

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number of animals being reproduced is the real problem.

"People still don't spay or neuter their animals and we're getting more people in this county so we're going to have more animals," Wilcox said. "The ordinance is not going to stop that. More people bring more animals and then we have more animals at large."

Further complicating the problem, Wilcox said, is that the county does not have an adequate animal impound facility, nor enough animal control officers to answer calls for service and conduct patrols.

"We're going to need a better facility and we're going to need more officers to patrol," he said. "Until we do that, nothing is going to change."

"This is a very large county and we don't have the space to impound all the animals that we would have to impound in order to get them all off the streets. We don't have the people to patrol the areas. We just run on complaints. When we get a complaint we try

and get there as soon as we can, but each officer has many calls. We have four animal control officers and two supervisors. We have three zones for the entire county and one officer in each zone. We need at least two officers in each zone and then, of course, we would have to have more trucks.

"Until the residents look at this as a priority, it is going to continue the way it is."

The county's animal control facility has 28 pens or "runs" to hold animals. But Wilcox said it frequently holds as many as 60 animals.

"We could triple the capacity (of the facility) and still fill it," he said.

Presiding County Commissioner Mark Mertens calls animal control "a priority," but said badly needed upgrades to the county courthouse must come first.

"We don't have any fire suppression in that courthouse at all," Mertens said. "We have more judges that are coming, so we're going to have to have more courtrooms."

"Animal control is a priority, but there are others that are ahead of it."

One sad aspect of animal control in Jefferson County is the number of animals that must be euthanized. Last year, the county killed about 2,700 animals, while only 212 were adopted.

"If (the animal) has no kind of identification it's impossible for us to contact the owner," Wilcox said. "A lot of times we'll get a call from someone who says their missing a black Lab, but we get a lot of black Labs. People have to come up here and take a look."

Wilcox said the remote location of the county animal shelter in Barnhart frequently discourages residents from making the trip to see an animal that may or may not be theirs. Wilcox believes the county needs a more centrally located facility.

To reduce the number of euthanizations, Wilcox said the county works closely with animal rescue organizations.

"Last year rescue groups pulled about 900 animals from us," he said.