

Man admits to animal cruelty

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By Rob Gavin

SCHENECTADY, N.Y. - A convicted felon who tortured to death two of his estranged wife's dogs and badly injured a third pooch pleaded guilty Wednesday to felony animal cruelty and faces two years behind bars, officials said.

Thomas Hendricks admitted to the torture while facing a separate contempt charge, for disobeying an order of protection, that could have sent him to state prison for two to four years.

He pleaded guilty to three counts of felony animal cruelty, receiving the maximum time possible under the state's "Buster's Law," passed in 1999 to punish the most heinous animal abusers.

Police learned of the torture after responding to a domestic call at the Hendricks' home in the city's Stockade neighborhood.

He first drowned one dog in a bathtub, then badly maimed a female toy poodle on Jan. 12 when he held her under scalding water. Investigators said he also yanked hair from the dog's legs.

Then on Jan. 24 he killed another dachshund, hitting it with a pool stick.

Hendricks, who has a prior weapon conviction, will be sentenced by Judge Karen Drago in Schenectady County Court.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Jessica Lorusso.