



Schenectady man sought after animals found dead in apartment

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Schenectady, N.Y. - Wendall Smith, 24 is wanted for questioning after an anonymous tip to Schoharie and Saratoga Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals discovered the decaying bodies of two cats and one surviving cat eating a decaying cat corpse in Smith's apartment. SPCA Chief Matthew Tully, in a prepared statement said this was one of the most disturbing cases he has ever had to investigate. The animals had been denied food and water.

On Thursday, investigators entered Smith's feces filled apartment, located at 1519 State Street, after reports from neighbors complaining about noxious odors. The surviving cat, who investigators named Bud was taken for emergency veterinary care, and according to the latest reports, Bud's prognosis is not promising.

Assemblyman Jim Tedisco, who originally introduced and championed Buster's Law, in response to egregious cases of animal abuse and Friday's arrest of Michael Perillo, continues to call for stricter animal abuse laws. He has recently introduced three new bills - A.1567, A.1506, and A.1580. The bills would require convicted animal abusers to undergo psychological evaluation, provide for a state-wide registry for animal abusers and the lists given to pet stores, animal shelters, and breeders, and prohibit convicted animal abusers from owning or caring for companion animal pets unless they are deemed mentally capable to care for an animal.

Assemblyman Tedisco cites examples of serial murderers like Jeffrey Dahmer, Ted Bundy, David "Son of Sam" Berkowitz, and Albert De Salvo, the Boston Strangler as examples of the FBI's reports of connections where animal abuse can lead to more serious crimes involving humans.

On Friday, Michael Perillo of 2438 Albany Street was picked up by police after an SPCA report stated Perillo abused his dog. The dog had multiple lacerations on his face, mouth, and eyes, missing teeth and was covered in blood with broken bones. Investigators suspect Perillo had duct-taped the dog's mouth shut. The dog was taken to the SPCA for treatment and is expected to make a full recovery. Perillo is being held on a variety of charges - including animal cruelty.

Buster's Law, signed in 1999 by then Governor George Pataki created the felony category of "aggravated cruelty to animals" which is punishable by up to two years in prison and a \$5,000 fine. The bill was named after Buster, an 18-month-old tabby cat who was doused with kerosene and burned to death by a Schenectady teenager in 1997. Nancy Bonesteel, owner of Buster said, "Buster, I really think he was serving a purpose."

Chester Williams, the Schenectady teen who was 16 when he set fire to Buster is currently serving a 12 year sentence in prison at Attica Correctional Facility. Williamson is a three-time felon and is serving time for the assault of a 12 year old.

It has been 11 years since the signing of Buster's Law, but abusers are still escaping felony convictions or prison terms. On June 1, 2011, Assemblyman Tedisco is sponsoring the first state-wide animal advocacy day at the Capitol where he will be advocating for tougher legislative support for the protection of animals.