

Print Date: Sunday, February 18, 2007

Last modified: Wednesday, March 23, 2005 12:45 AM PST

County euthanizes 38 dogs from Penryn home

By: Sarah Langford, Gold Country News Service

When neighbors called Placer County Animal Services to report a dog fight last month, they never envisioned the agency would kill 38 dogs.

However, animal control officials say their actions were justified and point to the 24 dogs that were saved.

On Feb. 12, Jeannine Breese was gardening in the yard of her Penryn home when a three-on-one dogfight broke out in her neighbor's yard.



Penryn resident Michael Henry leans against an empty dog kennel in his front yard Friday. In mid-February, 62 dogs were removed from Henry's home, and 38 were euthanized. Photo by Karina Williams/Auburn Journal

Breese called Placer County Animal Services, which responded to the call and paid a five-hour visit to the neighbor's house at 2560 Sunnydale Lane that evening. However, it was when they returned the following week that the real action occurred.

According to Breese, animal control officers and veterinarians spent two full days removing large dogs from the house and giving them medical attention under EZ-Up tents and tables set up on the front lawn.

"They were out there administering shots, taking photos and tagging the dogs," said Breese, whose third-story bayview window overlooks her neighbors' home. "Some animals were put to sleep on the spot. It was awful."

According to Brad Banner, client services director for the Environmental Health and Animal Services division, the owners were operating a sort of unlicensed dog kennel and voluntarily surrendered themselves to the county.

"Placer County Animal Services removed 62 dogs from a single home in unincorporated Placer County within the last 30 days, including Shar-peis, bull mastiffs and English bulldogs. The dogs had suffered a variety of problems and 24 made it and were placed in new homes. The rest were humanely euthanized with the help of consulting veterinarians," he said.

Banner said that the county is conducting an ongoing investigation into the case.

According to Breese, however, it took some coaxing on the end of the officers to be allowed inside her neighbors' house. She said she had been frustrated with the smell and barking from the dogs for months. She also said she witnessed the dogs' owner try to break up the fight with a wooden board, which was the last straw for her.

"We never, ever knew they had dogs except for the barking. We rarely saw them come outside. They were kept inside most of the time, all 60 of them," said Breese, who has lived in her home with husband Sean at 2540 Sunnydale Lane for about 10 years.

"When the fight broke out, I thought, 'That's it. Somebody has to do something.'"

Breese said the animal control officers later came up to her house and thanked her for the call. She has not had word about the incident since.

"I want to know what happened," she said. "I want to know how many dogs were put down and why."

The dog owner, Doreen Lee, has been advised against speaking to the media by her attorney, but according to Lee's husband, Michael Henry, breeding and selling purebred dogs is a passion of his wife's.

"It was total therapy for her, and they had no right to put them down," said Henry outside his now-empty home on Friday. "They should have let us try to place them, but they didn't even give us a chance. My wife is torn up about it."

Henry said he and Lee "more or less" knew that their business was out of compliance with local codes and county regulations, but denied that any harm had been done to the dogs. He said he and his wife have hired an attorney, but no formal charges have been filed by the county yet.

"It's a shame this had to happen," he said. "Nothing was wrong with them."

In the meantime, county officials have little to say about the incident, only that the investigation is ongoing.

"We were happy we were able to answer the call," Banner said. "Unfortunately, we can't release any more information than that for fear it would interfere with the investigation."

Sarah Langford can be reached at sarahl@goldcountrymedia.com.

[Close Window](#)