

Officials learn how to prosecute cases of animal cruelty

Robert Preston, Jr.

The Douglas News

DOUGLAS — Last Wednesday, law enforcement officers and animal control officials from as far away as Henry County attended a workshop at First United Methodist Church in Douglas that covered prosecuting animal cruelty cases.

Hosted by the Douglas-Coffee County Humane Society, the all-day workshop presented a comprehensive approach to investigating and prosecuting crimes against animals.

Legal Professionals for Animals, Inc., conducted the seminar, which was well attended by officers and officials from across the region. Coffee County

deputy Tony Perkins, assistant solicitor Phil Mote, solicitor Jeff Kight and State Court judge Bob Preston were among the Coffee County delegation who attended.

The unfortunate truth is that animal cruelty is all too common in South Georgia, and hasn't become a big law enforcement priority in Coffee County.

However, with the assignment of Perkins to investigate animal cruelty, things are beginning to turn in the right direction. Investigating animal cruelty is more important than many think; a correlation exists between animal

Please see CRUELTY, Page 5A

Page 5A

Cruelty

abuse and the abuse of children, spouses and other types of violence.

According to Joseph Brooks, animal cruelty investigator with Gwinnett County Animal Control in Lawrenceville, animal abuse can be classified as both misdemeanors and felonies. "It depends on the severity of the case," he said. People often offer a number of excuses for the condition of their animals. According to Brooks most excuses are unacceptable. Among those are: could not

afford treatment, thought the animal would be better off on its own, can't afford to take care of it and it doesn't belong to me. "Ignorance is not a defense," said Brooks.

Police officers, deputies, animal control officers and other officials from Tifton, Fitzgerald, Baxley and Hazlehurst attended the event, and packed the meeting room. "This is the first step: We need more prosecution of these cases," said a Humane Society spokesperson.



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Joseph Brooks, animal cruelty investigator in Gwinnett County, speaks with Phil Mote of the Coffee County solicitor's office.