

✓ ANIMAL WELFARE

Man accused of animal cruelty misses hearing; warrant issued

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SANTA CRUZ — A bench warrant was issued for the arrest of a Santa Cruz man accused of beating and attempting to drown a puppy.

Municipal Court Judge Richard McAdams issued the \$10,000 warrant Wednesday after John Gary McKee, 33, failed to show up for a court appearance.

McKee, who has pleaded innocent to five misdemeanor counts of cruelty to animals, has made all previous appointments, said public defender Ed Chun.

Wednesday's court date was to

review the disposition of the case, said Archie Webber, assistant district attorney.

"He'll show up either in custody or he will get in contact with his attorney, who can put the case back on the calendar," Webber said.

McKee was arrested on Sept. 23 by Santa Cruz police after neighbors reported seeing him beat, kick, choke and attempt to drown a golden retriever puppy.

He was originally charged with one count of animal cruelty, but authorities said an investigation

revealed incidents of cruelty that occurred between Aug. 1 and 31.

The alleged incidents include breaking a puppy's leg and forcing a garden hose down a dog's throat, officials said.

Since his arrest, the case has attracted widespread attention and has touched animal lovers enough that some have attended McKee's court hearings.

Three dogs — an adult German shepherd and two golden retriever pups — were adopted after McKee surrendered them to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.