

Animal Welfare

Dog's death leads to arrest

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APTOS — An Aptos man, reportedly upset because the family dog had soiled the carpet, was arrested Thursday after he slammed the animal to the ground and killed it, state humane officers said.

The incident occurred during the early hours of Dec. 31, but was not reported until Jan. 2, according to Sgt. Lisa Juday, field services manager of the SPCA in Santa Cruz.

Witnesses told authorities the suspect, identified as Richard Craig French, 45, had been sleeping in a home at 407 Cliff Drive where he was caring for his invalid father.

French awoke around 1 a.m. and saw the carpet had been soiled, Juday said. Witnesses reported he seized the dog and threw it to the ground, she said.

French reportedly took the dog to the animal shelter the next day to be disposed of and said it had been run over by a car.

The dog, a small mixed-breed dog named "Freeway," belonged to the man's father, whose name was not released, according to Juday. The dog was so named because it had been found wandering on the freeway years ago, according to reports.

Juday said the witnesses told relatives about the incident and authorities eventually were contacted.

French was arrested without incident by state humane officers at the home and the man's father was reportedly transferred to a local hospital.

Three cats and another dog who had been at the home are now in protective custody at the animal shelter.

French, who listed his occupation as unemployed, was booked into County Jail on suspicion of felony cruelty to domesticated animals. Bail was set at \$5,000.