

Animal Welfare Innocent plea in cruelty case

By DONNA KIMURA
Sentinel staff writer

9-26-91

SANTA CRUZ — A man accused of beating, kicking, choking and attempting to drown a golden retriever puppy pleaded innocent to a misdemeanor charge of animal cruelty Wednesday.

John McKee, 33, of Santa Cruz, entered the plea in Municipal Court, where Judge Richard McAdams appointed a public defender to represent him.

If convicted, the charge can bring jail time, McAdams said.

The case touched two animal lovers enough to attend the morning court proceedings. They had never met McKee before.

"They (dogs) are defenseless," said Pete Granstrom, who attended the arraignment after reading about the case in the newspaper. "When you hear about that type of abuse it is in some respects worse than man on man."

Dorothy Welch said she was also motivated to go to court after hearing about the alleged abuse.

Neighbors of McKee reportedly gave police six written statements alleging that McKee hit, kicked and mistreated his dogs on several occasions.

Please see CRUELTY — A8

Cruelty

Continued from Page A1

Three dogs were taken from McKee on Monday — an adult German shepherd and two 5-month-old male and female golden retriever pups.

The male pup, which was wet and dirty when it arrived at an animal hospital, was bleeding into the whites of his eyes with "a significant hemorrhage," a veterinarian said.

Other injuries included a newly fractured rib, an older rib fracture, a fever and diarrhea.

The female puppy had old, unhealed rib and leg fractures and a dislocated hip that will require surgery to fix, said the veterinarian.

According to the Santa Cruz Veterinary Hospital, both puppies were improving Wednesday. The female, however, was going to be placed into an intensive-care unit

for treatment of pneumonia.

According to reports, McKee told police he had been disciplining his dogs when the neighbors started yelling at him. McKee said he sprayed the dogs with water and spanked them after they defecated on the lawn.

In court, Assistant District Attorney Archie Webber said additional charges may be filed against McKee. He said the misdemeanor animal cruelty charge may also be amended to be a felony.

Saying that McKee is a 22-year resident of Santa Cruz County, Judge McAdams released him from jail on his own recognizance Wednesday.

McKee, however, is not allowed to possess any animals while the case is pending.

He was ordered by McAdams "not to be in the proximity of pets or animals unless there is a SPCA officer present."