

Media Release

Yavapai County Sheriff's Office

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July 1, 2014

Black Canyon City resident arrested for Animal Cruelty- Incident involves Hundreds of Domesticated Rats

On June 30, 2014, Yavapai County Health Services personnel requested assistance with a possible animal cruelty investigation at a home in the 19200 block of E. Abbott Street, Black Canyon City. Health Services had received a call from a citizen reporting numerous dying and dead rats in around a trailer on the property.

Upon arrival, deputies and YCSO Animal Control Officers could immediately smell urine, feces, and the odor of dead animal carcass' emanating from the property. A large travel trailer was inspected as it was the strongest source of the odor. This trailer had a pen inside the front section that contained several dead and dying rats and pens to the rear with an estimated 300 to 500 rats, most of which appeared dead or dying. The temperature inside the trailer was over 100 degrees and the odor was overwhelming.

Inside the main residence, YCSO personnel found several aquariums with newborn and adult rats. The animals appeared in good condition and had food and water. No one was home at the time.

Deputies learned that a person by the name of "Jeff," later identified as 28-year-old Jeffrey Wendorff, was the known caretaker for the rats. Wendorff was located at a nearby business and detained. He initially denied knowledge of any animals on the Abbott Street property, but eventually admitted he had stopped caring for the rats recently and said, "As far as I know, they're probably all dead." Wendorff indicated he was living at the location until a couple of weeks ago. Both he and the property owner had previously entered into a business partnership for the purpose of breeding and selling rats for profit. This arrangement also allowed Wendorff to live on the property rent free. Following a pay dispute, Wendorff abandoned his duty as the primary caretaker, moved, and abandoned the animals. The property owner is apparently only a part time resident.

Wendorff was arrested and charged with Cruel Mistreatment of Animals and Cruel Neglect/Abandonment of Animal – both misdemeanors. He was booked at the Camp Verde Detention



Wendorff



Travel Trailer containing
hundreds of rats

Center and has since been released on a promise to appear for court. The investigation is ongoing as to others who might be complicit in this activity.

Citizens can contact the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office with information or questions at 928-771-3260 or the YCSO website:
www.ycsoaz.gov