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**\*\*\*MEDIA ALERT\*\*\***

**For Immediate Release**

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## **WOMAN WHO LEFT DOGS TO DIE AND STARVE RECEIVES PROBATION; STATE REQUESTED PRISON**

Evansville, IN – Prosecutor Diana Moers announces that on June 29, 2023, Shayna Faye Burko was sentenced after a plea of guilty to seven felony-level counts of cruelty to an animal before Magistrate Judge Ryan C. Reed of the Vanderburgh Circuit Court.

On July 9, 2022, Vanderburgh County Sheriff's Office and Vanderburgh County Animal Control were dispatched to 3133 Mooring Rd in reference to a welfare check on animals left unattended.

The animals, who were owned by the Defendant's mother but supposed to be taken care of by the Defendant, were found in horrific conditions. 43 exhibits were presented to the court including photographs that showed extreme malnourishment and neglect so bad that Deputies testified they could smell the noxious odor inside the house from the street. The home, left in the care of the Defendant, was filled with urine, feces, and dead dogs—including a German Shepherd in a kennel with bags of dog food next to it, a decapitated dog, a dog missing a paw (but still alive), and a dog limb found in a hallway.

The Defendant has a prior conviction in Warrick County that included three counts of animal cruelty and, here, admitted to knowing the dogs were at the residence and failing to care for them.

At sentencing the Prosecution alerted the court that the Defendant is in violation of the conditions of her bail, which included a prohibition from animal possession, by presenting evidence that she is currently living with animals. The Defendant's grandmother testified at sentencing that the Defendant has a puppy who is a "service dog." The court's sentencing order permits the Defendant to live with animals as long as they do not belong to her and she is permitted keep her purported service dog.

Prosecutor Moers stated: "The Defendant's horrific actions are absolutely shocking to the conscience. What is more, this is not her first conviction and the evidence today from both the prosecution and the defense was that she still has access to animals despite the court previously ordering her not to. I am happy to report that, today, we requested the maximum executed sentence of four years, noting prior criminal history of the same nature, violation of conditions of bail and the egregiousness of the crime itself. The court found none of those statutorily aggravating circumstances applied and sentenced the Defendant to two years of probation."

“We will not give up on aggressive prosecution of animal neglect and cruelty cases. I am thankful for those who called the police in this case as well as animal control and the deputies who were able to remove the remaining living dogs from this house of horrors and bring them to safety. It is my prayer that these dogs find loving homes and healing.”

Moers went on to say: “If you suspect animal abuse, neglect, or mistreatment, please call authorities. It is very important to identify those who harm and neglect animals—not only for the benefit of the animals, but our society. I take cases of proven animal abuse and neglect very seriously.”

Prosecutor Moers thanks Deputy Prosecutor Jeremy Kemper for his efforts in preparing for and presenting evidence at the sentencing. Moers also thanks Adrienne McDowell and Anthony McKnight with Animal Control, Detectives Matthew Elrod and Kirk Kuester as well as Deputies Jung with the Vanderburgh County Sheriff’s office, and all other officers for their diligent efforts in this case.

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