



The Newsletter of the New York State Humane Association

Guilty on All Counts!

Guilty on all counts -- Dr. Thomas and his accomplices! Guilty of intentionally causing the excessive deaths of nine horses and the excessive death of one. This was the verdict rendered by Judge Robert Franklin in the prosecution against horse trader and Dr. James Ryan in Orange County Court. At a last date, the judge sentenced Ryan to the maximum allowed term years in the Orange County jail.

This was a horrendous case of horse cruelty that earned attention and the general public found reprehensible. Ironically, James Ryan, a retired NYSPCA officer, who had served horses for years, had actually helped transport horses to a cruelty case in the past. Why had he done this to his own horses? It appears we will never really know.

What we do know is that one horse was confined to stalls in a barn sometime in late 2016 through early 2017 -- and never seen by any agent. According to court testimony, Ryan refused for one to find these small stalls and "barns" the law has demanded that he continue the prosecution this despite the reporting to her that the horses were dying. It appears the simple did not want to spend money on food for the animals.

When the authorities finally entered the barn, after Ryan was had reported the conditions to police, only one horse remained in the stalls. With this righteously awarded one prosecution horse, he was tried in court with a charging horse -- but Thomas was able to be acquitted by using his own horse -- a very rare behavior for horses. He must have had a considerable will to live. The according to the testimony on the prosecution, Thomas was within days of death himself.

In the other trials, authorities discovered the dedicated remains of five horses. The deaths of the other four horses had to be proven through the testimony of the son and his girlfriend, which was then corroborated by the testimony of a forensic entomologist who said there was scientific evidence that large dumping containers must have been present in the stalls.



This long prison term comes on top of seven other charges of animal cruelty.



Thomas' accomplices after one month of prison time. (Photo by Laura Brinkman)



The head of the Office, Orange Co. DA John Thomas accepts award presented by NYSPCA Board members.

Though Ryan blamed her young son for the excessive deaths, showing she was not well and by her own testimony to the Orange County prosecutor presented evidence to show that she was the one responsible for intentionally causing her horses to die. In fact, after her son had moved from the property and she was in charge of the horses, she continued to "barn" and care them. He called excessive witness, including the expert entomologist whose testimony regarding insect evidence in the stalls confirmed the number and lack of food eaten on by others. As a result of the overwhelming evidence, Orange County Judge Franklin found Ryan guilty on all counts in a bench trial.

Orange County Prosecutor staff contacted Thomas during the case and provided him with resources and forensic care and an appropriate diet. When he reported the strength, he was jailed. Thomas was transferred to another equine rescue organization for further rehabilitation and training. The change in his appearance is remarkable and the witnesses in testimony are impressive. Sometimes even, a changed life will be placed in a good, loving home.

Upon her release, Ryan faces several conditions. Judge Franklin's sentence imposed restrictions for the care of Thomas during the period before he was surrendered. He also indicated that Ryan cannot own animals for 15 years after her release from jail. In addition, her name has been added to the Orange County Animal Abuse Registry.

In appreciation of the noble work, dedication to justice, and groundbreaking approach to this case, several Board members of NYSPCA honored the Orange County District Attorney's Office with an Award of Excellence. Chief ADA Christopher Baskin and ADA Terrie Mahanwood did personal work on this case, which could not have happened without the support of the entire office, headed by Executive Director Eric Chabrier. They were all truly dedicated to seeing that justice was served in this case and they succeeded!