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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **CECELIA JOHNSON OF NORRISTOWN ARRESTED FOR FELONY ANIMAL CRUELTY IN FREEZING DEATH OF HER DOG**



NORRISTOWN, Pa. (April 11, 2018) — Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele and Norristown Police Chief Mark E. Talbot Sr. announce the arrest of Cecelia Ann Johnson, 64, of Norristown, for the death of her dog, Champ, who froze to death during the first week of January after being left outside in sub-zero temperatures. Johnson is charged with felony Aggravated Cruelty to Animals as well as Cruelty to Animals and Neglect of an Animal, both misdemeanors.

On Jan. 6, 2018, the Norristown Police received an anonymous call about a dead dog outside of a residence in 1200 block of Swede Street. Officers responded just before noon and located the deceased dog lying on the ground between his doghouse and a neighboring fence outside. The overnight low the previous night had been minus 2 degrees with a wind chill of negative 20 degrees, and Montgomery County officials had instituted a "Code Blue" alert regarding the dangers of being outdoors in such weather.

A necropsy (animal autopsy) was performed on Champ's body by the Pennsylvania Animal Diagnostic Laboratory Systems. The necropsy report dated April 4, 2018 listed the cause of death as "hypothermia due to prolonged exposure to low ambient

temperatures” and manner of death as “non-accidental (neglect).” The report also noted that the dog had been underfed and was dehydrated from lack of available water due to “freezing environmental temperatures.”

“This dog Champ suffered as he froze to death just because his owner did not take him inside on one of the coldest nights of the winter. She left him outside without food, without water and without adequate shelter,” said Steele. “Treating an animal so inhumanely is a serious crime, and we are going to seek justice for Champ’s death.”

The defendant was arraigned April 6, 2018 before Magisterial District Judge Margaret Hunsicker. Bail was set at \$10,000 unsecured, and Johnson was released. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for 11 a.m., April 19, 2018 before Magisterial District Judge Gregory Scott.

Justice for Champ will be sought by Assistant District Attorney Lauren Marvel, who handles animal abuse cases and is part of the District Attorney’s Family Protection Unit.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele

*CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.*