



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

KEVIN R. STEELE

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

EDWARD F. McCANN, JR.

FIRST ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY

COURTHOUSE

P.O. BOX 311

NORRISTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

19404-0311

SAMUEL J. GALLEN

CHIEF COUNTY DETECTIVE

JESSE S. KING

CHIEF OF STAFF

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S FAX

COUNTY DETECTIVE BUREAU

(610) 278-3090

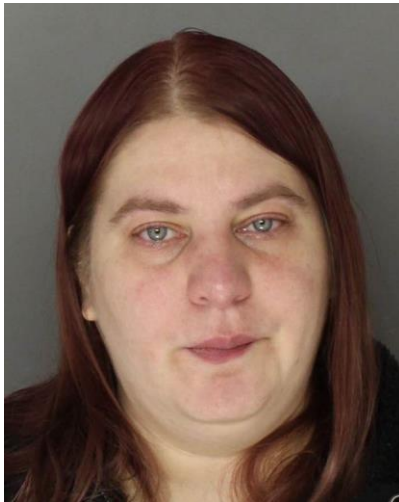
(610) 278-3095

(610) 278-3368

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kate Delano c: 610-312-3487

MELANIE REHRIG AND JASON WIEDER CHARGED WITH ANIMAL CRUELTY FOR NEGLECT, DEATHS OF EXOTIC ANIMALS IN UPPER HANOVER TOWNSHIP HOME



REHRIG



WIEDER

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (Nov. 29, 2018) — Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele and Pennsylvania State Police Troop K, Skippack Station announce the arrests of Melanie Rehrig, 33, and Jason Wieder, 39, of 1131 Station Road in Palm, Pa., on multiple felony and misdemeanor charges related to the 258 exotic animals seized from their residences.

On Oct. 16, 2018, a Humane Society Police Officer received a call about an animal cruelty investigation in Lehigh County involving the two defendants, during which it was discovered that the defendants were moving animals to an Upper Hanover Home. A search warrant was executed on the home on Oct. 18, 2018. Many types of animals—including alligators, tortoises, turtles, snakes, frogs, skunks, guinea pigs and rats—were found being kept in unsanitary and unsafe conditions, and 258 animals were seized, including two animals that were endangered species (Southern Leopard Frogs).

An investigation was begun, and the animals were evaluated by a veterinarian. Two snakes were found deceased and one had to be euthanized due to the severity of its condition. Two tortoises and two guinea pigs were unable to be saved due to neglect by the defendants. In addition, many animals were suffering from severe dehydration, and some animals had medical conditions that required veterinary care that was never performed.

The defendants were each charged with five counts of Aggravated Cruelty to Animals (F3), 23 counts of Neglect of Animals (M3), two counts of Possession of Threatened or Endangered Species without a permit (M3), and 516 counts of Neglect of Animals (summary) for failure to provide necessary sustenance and water, as well as clean and sanitary shelter.

The defendants were arraigned Nov. 26, 2018 before Magisterial District Judge Maureen C. Coggins. Bail was set at \$25,000 unsecured, and they were released. Additional bail conditions were: no animal possession, no animal ownership and no intentional contact with animals. The original preliminary hearing date is being rescheduled.

The case will be prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Lauren Marvel, who handles animal abuse cases and is part of the 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.