

## **Press Release**

**April 28, 2010**

### **Animal welfare groups unite to call for maximum penalty for alleged horse abusers**

Animal Welfare groups as well as the victims of recent animal abuse will protest outside the Somerset West district court tomorrow (April 29) from 09:00am, when three minors and an adult, accused of stealing and mutilating a horse from a farm in Faure, will appear on charges of theft and animal cruelty.

Staff and volunteers from the Cape of Good Hope (CoGH) SPCA and the Cart Horse Protection Association (CHPA) will join Astrid Myburg whose horse, Buckacee, was stolen from her farm on Thursday, 18 March and allegedly endured three days of horrific and disturbing mistreatment. When the horse was eventually found on Monday morning, barely able to put one foot in front of the other, it was bleeding profusely from a large open wound; his belly was lowered, the muscle having been completely lacerated; and his legs and feet were covered in blood. One side of his jaw was swollen and he had bad lacerations in his mouth, most probably caused by the perpetrators using barbed wire as a crude bit.

The devastated owner's vet was called and without hesitation she immediately euthanased him, as his injuries and trauma sustained was too severe. How he made it back home is a miracle and testimony to the incredible bond that he shared with his owner.

The SPCA, which is dedicated to helping prevent equine and animal abuse, and the CHPA, which is dedicated to preventing abuse of cart horses, have with the help of the Western Cape Equine Trust (WCET), secured the services of a private investigator to assist the police with there investigations into this horrific and disturbing case.

They have collectively called for the courts to take a strong stand against the alleged perpetrators if they are found guilty, and award the maximum sentence. Under a district court the maximum sentence is a R60 000 fine and/or 12 months imprisonment. Their call has been made regardless of whether the alleged are minors or first time offenders. Said CEO of the CoGH SPCA, Allan Perrins: "Too often we see suspended sentences with puny fines being handed down in animal abuse cases, which is unacceptable. We need the courts to take a firm stand and send a clear message that we as a civilised nation will not tolerate animal abuse".

Niki Gerneke, an attorney and committee member of the CPHA concurs with Mr Perrins. She adds that "we need our courts to invoke our laws and to send out a strong message that abuse against horses, and any animal for that matter, will not be tolerated in South Africa".

Ends

Issued by the CoGH SPCA and CHPA.

Notes to the editor

The court case is set down for 29 April in the Somerset West Magistrate's Court (Caledon Street). The case number is 447-2-2010 and three of the alleged perpetrators are between 14 – 16 years and a fourth is believed to be 18 years old.

SPCA and CHPA protestors will congregate outside the court from 9am on Thursday, April 29.