

Kinston man guilty of manslaughter

Matt Elofson

melofson@dothaneagle.com

A Kinston man faces two to 20 years in prison after a Geneva County jury found him guilty Thursday of shooting a Samson man to death the day after Christmas in 2007.

According to a statement from the Geneva County District Attorney's Office, a jury convicted Matthew Leske, 20, of manslaughter in the death of Brent Cook.



Matthew Leske

A Geneva County grand jury previously returned an indictment charging Leske with murder, but the jury found him guilty of the lesser included charge of manslaughter. Leske was taken into custody after the guilty verdict. He'd previously been released after he posted a \$150,000 bond the day after his arrest on Dec. 26, 2007.

Circuit Judge Ken Quattlebaum will sentence Leske on Aug. 6. He faces two to 20 years in prison for the class B felony of manslaughter.

Cook was killed during a dispute in the front yard at Tasha Saulter's home near Samson, off County Road 10.

Attorney John Knowles, who represented Leske, said his client killed Cook in self-defense. Knowles said Cook was the ex-boyfriend of the woman at the home, and he got into a confrontation with his client.

"We contended that (Cook) was aggressive, and created the situation," Knowles said. "The defendant merely defended himself."

Prosecutors contended Leske intended to kill the unarmed Cook when he shot him in the chest with a rifle.

"This entire case was a tragedy for all concerned," District Attorney Kirke Adams said in a statement. "The law is clear that the taking of human life in self-defense is reserved for the most extreme circumstances, and this certainly was not one of those circumstances."