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DOTHAN EAGLE

Teens face felony animal abuse charge

Dog beaten to death with a metal pipe

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James Yancey

"We rescued her, and she would've lived a great life with us," Benson said. "She was our pet. We took good care of her, and Blake was actually looking forward to having a good companion."



Justin Goldsmith

Six-month-old Bailey, a black Labrador retriever, loved to jump around and play and often even tried to jump up onto people's laps. Elizabeth Benson said she and her fiancé, Blake Mills, have realized how much they'll miss Bailey now that she's gone.

Bailey died on Monday, Nov. 8, in a field not far from the couple's home near Malvern. Shortly after Bailey's death, Geneva County Sheriff's deputies arrested two teenagers on misdemeanor animal cruelty charges. Authorities believe the dog was beaten to death with a metal pipe.

Geneva County District Attorney Kirke Adams said Tuesday that he had upgraded the charges, dismissing the misdemeanors and replacing them with abuse charge.

Adams said both 18-year-old James Spencer Yancey II and 19-year-old Justin Kyle Goldsmith have been charged with felony animal abuse. He said both teenagers had not been arrested on the felony charges, but were wanted Tuesday afternoon.

If convicted, both Yancey, of Peacock Road, Dothan, and Goldsmith, of Old Malvern Road, Slocomb, face one to 10 years in prison for the class C felony animal abuse charge, Adams said.

"It's a rarely used statute statewide, the felony animal cruelty charge," Adams said.

See ABUSE, 2A



Contributed photo
Bailey is shown in a photo provided by her owner.

Abuse

continued from 1A

"I cannot recall another case since I've been the district attorney that someone has

beaten an animal to death. But I believe the torture statute is for these kind of cases."

Benson said she recalled arriving home that Monday with her fiancé to see Bailey running through a field with two young men, including one who her fiancé recognized as a neighbor. A few minutes after they stepped out of their vehicle, Benson said she began to hear what she described as a dog screaming from the nearby field. As Benson and fiancé approached the field they saw a pickup truck speeding away. When Benson found Bailey at the edge of some woods she was already dead.

Benson said they found Bailey's pink camouflage collar hanging from a tree branch that stretched over her body. Benson said Bailey was not known to provoke people.

"We could actually hear Bailey screaming and yelping," Benson said. "She is not vicious. She is very sweet, and didn't deserve that. I think it deserves to be a felony charge, not a misdemeanor, because I think it was cruel. It was just incredibly unnecessary."