

Dog Fighter Gets 11 Years Despite Plea for Probation

By Sarah Gilbert

Dale County District Attorney Kirke Adams said he was "insulted" that a man who pleaded guilty to fighting dogs described his actions as a "non-violent crime."

Timothy McLeod, 30, had asked the court for probation on his conviction after pleading guilty in September. But on Nov. 16, Circuit Judge Ben McLauchlin sentenced him to 11 years in state prison, one year for each of the nine dogs that had to be euthanized, one year for possession of marijuana and one year for possession of a controlled substance.

McLeod was also ordered to pay \$3,500 in restitution to Andrews Avenue Animal Hospital, which treated and cared for the dogs after they were discovered in the backyard of McLeod's Willa Street home.

Members of the Wiregrass Violent Crimes and Drug Task Force had gone to McLeod's home to serve a search warrant for narcotics. After finding the drugs and paraphernalia, one of the officers noticed a couple of pit bull dogs chained up in the backyard. Officers found 14 pit bull or pit bull mix dogs,

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most suffering from multiple cuts and other injuries.

Further investigation turned up the bodies of three other pit bull dogs in the woods behind the home.

Several of the dogs wore heavy logging chains, a method used to build up their chest muscles, Dr. Christa Bragg told McLauchlin during the probation hearing Thursday. Their teeth had also been sharpened and given only minimal water and food. Denying food will make dogs more aggressive.

Bragg said she also saw a fighting arena that had been constructed in the backyard.

After receiving medical

treatment and temperament evaluations, five of the dogs were placed in homes away from the Ozark area, Bragg said. The other nine were euthanized due to their poor medical condition and/or temperament problems, she said.

McLeod's attorney, Aaron Gartlan, told McLauchlin said McLeod was in "a different situation in his life" when the arrest occurred and has since moved back to home to help his sister care for his ailing mother, who has suffered a stroke.

While McLeod's sentence carries a possibility of parole, Adams said he would do

whatever he could to keep him locked up as long as possible.

"We want to send the message that there's room next to McLeod for anyone who is involved in any type of animal fighting or cruelty," Adams said.

Adams also commended Bragg for not only her testimony in the case, but also her care and concern for the animals.