



Guilty on All Counts!

Guilty on all counts – 10 felonies and 10 misdemeanors! Guilty of intentionally causing the starvation deaths of nine horses and the imminent death of one. That was the verdict rendered by Judge Robert Freehill in the precedent-setting horse cruelty trial of Jeanne Ryan in Orange County Court. At a later date, the judge sentenced Ryan to the maximum allowed: two years in the Orange County jail.

This was a horrendous case of horse cruelty that animal advocates and the general public found unfathomable. Ironically, Jeanne Ryan, a retired NYPD officer, who had owned horses for years, had actually helped transport horses in a cruelty case in the past. Why had she done this to her own horses? It appears we will never really know.

What we do know is that ten horses were confined to stalls in a barn sometime in late 2016 through early 2017 – and were never let out again. According to court testimony, Ryan ordered her son to feed them small rations and “stretch” the hay. She demanded that he continue the starvation diet, despite his reporting to her that the horses were dying. It appears she simply did not want to spend money on food for the animals.

When the authorities finally entered the barn, after Ryan’s son had reported the conditions to police, only one horse peered out at his rescuers. With skin tightly stretched over prominent bones, he was stuck in a stall with a decaying horse – but Shamus was alive. He had survived by eating his own feces – a very rare behavior for horses. He must have had a tremendous will to live. Yet according to the veterinarian on the rescue team, Shamus was within days of death himself.

In the other stalls, authorities discovered the desiccated remains of five horses. The deaths of the other four horses had to be proven through the testimony of the son and his girlfriend, which was then corroborated by the testimony of a forensic entomologist who said there was scientific evidence that large decaying carcasses must have been present in the stalls.



After being groomed by rescuers on day of seizure, Shamus relaxes in safe surroundings.



Shamus' transformation after two months of proper care. (Photo by Laurie Brinkworth)



On behalf of his Office, Orange Co. DA Dave Hoovler accepts award presented by NYSHA Board members.

Though Ryan blamed her young son for the starvation deaths, claiming she was not well and he was tending to the horses to earn his keep, the Orange County prosecutor presented evidence to show that she was the one responsible for intentionally starving her horses to death. In fact, after her son had moved from the property, and she was in charge of the horses, she continued to “stretch it” and starve them. He called numerous witnesses, including the expert entomologist whose testimony regarding insect evidence in the stalls confirmed the timeline and lack of food sworn to by others. As a result of the overwhelming evidence, Orange County Judge Freehill found Ryan guilty on all counts in a bench trial.

Equine Rescue Resource staff removed Shamus during the rescue and provided him with veterinary and farrier care and an appropriate diet. When he regained his strength, he was gelded. Shamus was transferred to another equine rescue organization for further rehabilitation and training. The change in his appearance is remarkable and his advances in training are impressive. Sometime soon, it is hoped he will be placed in a good, loving home.

Upon her release, Ryan faces several conditions. Judge Freehill’s sentence imposed restitution for the care of Shamus during the period before he was surrendered. He also ordered that Ryan cannot own animals for 15 years after her release from jail. In addition, her name has been added to the Orange County Animal Abuse Registry.

In appreciation of the stellar work, dedication to justice, and precedent-setting approach to this case, several Board members of NYSHA honored the Orange County District Attorney’s Office with an *Award of Excellence*. Chief ADA Christopher Borek and ADA Anika Mohammed did yeoman’s work on this case, which could not have happened without the support of the entire office, headed by District Attorney Dave Hoovler. They were all truly dedicated to seeing that justice was served in this case and they succeeded!

President's Message

Given the concern about terrorist attacks, the public has been urged to be vigilant with the mantra of "If you see something, say something." That same guidance should be applied to animal cruelty situations. Animals cannot dial 911 or call for help, but we can do so on their behalf. And we should; it is the moral and responsible thing to do.

When you make that call, you need to have your facts in order: what is the exact location of the animal, did *you* witness the situation that is putting the animal in danger or observe the conditions that are causing the animal to be neglected, can the authorities see the animal from the roadway or is it hidden away on the property, and if the animal is not visible from the road, are you willing to sign a statement for the police of what you observed? These are all necessary steps to help authorities respond to a dangerous situation for an animal.

One NY county has stepped up to make such reporting easier. In 2018, Kristy Sprague, the District Attorney of Essex County, launched an animal cruelty hotline for the public to use to report cases of suspected cruelty or neglect. According to Sprague, this includes abuse to any animal – pets, wildlife, and farm animals, all of which are protected under NYS law. "Law enforcement officers depend on tips from neighbors, community members, and passersby to intervene before it's too late," said Sprague. "Animals can't advocate for themselves. We're counting on the public to be their voice." The hotline connects the caller to county Emergency Response dispatchers, who pass the information along to an appropriate law enforcement agency.

The hotline has been well received and authorities have investigated many cruelty complaints, of which numerous dealt with abandoned animals in situations that might otherwise have gone unaddressed, and animals left out in frigid temperatures who might otherwise have died. Sprague says, "Addressing animal cruelty as early as possible can save lives."

Upon hearing of this innovative approach, we contacted our DA's Office in Ulster County where the NYSHA office is located. We provided the staff with the information from Essex, and they are forming a plan to put it in effect in our county.

This approach needs to be implemented throughout the state to effect a quick response to animals in need, and we urge you, our readers, to please do a Google search on: *Essex County Launches Animal Abuse Hotline*, print that press release, present it to your DA, and ask him/her to implement it your county. Both the animals and the people who care about them will benefit.

Always be kind to animals,
Patricia Valusek

NYSHA's Calendar

Horse racing season will begin soon. Please watch for our alerts about protests at race tracks, and for legislative bills regarding racehorses.

Visit NYSHA's table at **Albany VegFest on Sept. 8** at the Albany Capital Center, 55 Eagle St. Information for this entertaining and educational event is at www.vegevents.com/events/albany-vegfest-2019/.

Also, we hope to see you at **Hudson Valley VegFest on Oct. 19** in Kingston, at BSP, 323 Wall Street. Information for this event is at hvvegfest.org.

Check NYSHA's website – nyshumane.org – for upcoming workshops on **Investigating Animal Cruelty**.

Welcome to New Board Member

We welcome Rebecca Diamond to the NYSHA Board of Directors. She brings much compassion for animals and many talents to the Board. After graduating from Emerson College in Boston, she taught English for a number of years and obtained her MA in Sociology from SUNY New Paltz. Presently, she is a business partner with her husband in their archaeological consulting firm.



She has been actively involved in animal rights fundraising, rescue work, and adoptions for over 20 years. She has worked with NYSHA on a number of cases since 2008, and in 2018, started working with NYSHA to help pass animal welfare legislation. Rebecca is devoted to helping animals in need and educating the public on their humane care and treatment. She credits her mom, an ardent animal welfare advocate, for providing the wonderful example throughout Rebecca's formative years that led to her own life's mission to help animals.

The Vet Is In

Not only does spaying your dog or cat prevent pregnancies, early sterilization prevents life threatening conditions, such as pyometra and mammary cancer. Don't miss the article on our website – nyshumane.org – by NYSHA's VP, Holly Cheever, DVM, about this important topic and how easy it is to prevent your pet from suffering from these dangerous and expensive-to-treat conditions.

The World Around Us – Protecting Birds

Who doesn't love a baby animal? Yet every spring, millions of baby birds are killed by one of our favorite companions – cats. The argument that it is just nature is not appropriate – we domesticated them and added them to the already challenging environment our feathered friends face. In fact, the Audubon Society strongly opposes feline trap/neuter/release programs because of the dangers to all birds.

We need to consider the following facts: the number-one, human-caused threat to birds in the US and Canada, is hunting by domestic cats; approximately 2.4 billion birds are killed in the US each year by free-roaming cats; even well-fed cats will hunt and kill; and finally, just the presence of cats has been shown to decrease the nesting success for some birds.

Adjusting a free-roaming cat to live indoors may take some time, however, here are some suggestions for doing so: add a playmate to the household, such as another cat or dog; provide interactive toys and scratching posts that are changed or moved from time to time; place cat perches near a window for viewing, and provide hiding places such as cardboard boxes and kitty tents and perhaps, add a screened-in window extension. If you still want to let your cat outside, consider a “catio” (a securely confined outdoor area) or take your cat for a walk using a leash.

A last thought – many birdfeeders are placed near windows to give cats a close view, but frequently birds fly into the glass. Keep the feeders a distance away, near greenery where birds can rest and eat, and consider placing stickers or clings on the windows to alert them. However, if they do have a collision and seem injured, give them a



short while to recover before taking action. Sometimes they are just stunned and need some time to regain their strength. Not having to fend off the advances of a cat is to their advantage!

Our Voices in Albany

It's that time again – at NYSHA, we're busy working with legislators to promote protective legislation for animals as bills are being proposed and going through the process in the NYS Legislature.

Among our priorities are bills protecting horses – for example, establishing a commission on retired racehorses (A.3535-S.1974), and preventing horses from being subjected to performance-enhancing drugs (A.1976).

An important bill would move the cruelty laws from Agriculture & Markets Law to Penal Law (A.342-S.3867). Moving the cruelty laws would mean that new recruits would receive the same training on animal cruelty as they do on other offenses in the Penal Law, and thus be prepared to effectively enforce the cruelty laws.

Additional bills we support are: prohibiting cruel egg hatching projects in schools; requiring veterinarians to report suspected cruelty or abuse

of their clients' animals to authorities; enhancing the safety of our pets by requiring the training and licensing of pet groomers; prohibiting the devocalization of dogs and cats; requiring pet shops to safeguard their animals by having fire protection systems.

What you can do:

- Check NYSHA's website – nyshumane.org/legislation -- for a **list of the bills** that we urge you to support or oppose and information on how to do that.
- Request a list from NYSHA if you do not use the internet – 845-336-4514
- If a bill has made it to a vote in the Assembly or Senate, it is important to contact the state Assemblyperson or Senator who represents your district and let him/her know of your support.

Spotlight – Valerie Lang Waldin

How many times do you hear something that sounds too good to be true? At NYSHA, we have worked with Val Lang Waldin on multiple issues and projects, and in her case, all the good things we hear about her we know to be real. Val's resume is so packed with achievements we could fill this newsletter and still not have enough space to list them all. With degrees in the law, economics, and library science, she has devoted her energies to countless community and nationwide animal protection initiatives.

As a professor at Hudson Valley Community College, Val established course outlines leading to the Animal Law and Certificate Program, the first of its kind for undergraduates. She is a consultant for legislators, a sought after speaker, and co-founder of HVCC's Animal Outreach Club. At the request of well-known TV host Bob Barker, she established The Animal Rights Forum at Drury University. In addition to the many other hats she wears, Val is currently VP of Responsible Animal Care USA, concentrating on statewide animal control and cat licensing.

Val is such a thoughtful and thought-provoking person, we decided her own words say more than a biography. Following are highlights of a recent conversation with this impressive and beloved advocate.

Was there a point in your life when you decided that animal protection was something that you wanted to devote yourself to or were you just born loving animals? There was. I had always loved animals innately, but for some reason was truly awakened when I was once surfing the Internet about animal careers. I saw a PETA piece on downed cows. I had no idea how we treat the animals we eat. I vowed that day to somehow make a difference and still have a picture of that beautiful and helpless cow. It changed my life.

What is the most challenging issue you have faced in your work? By far the biggest challenge has been people who think animal rights activists are inaccurate or with a crazy agenda. Animal rights activists have seen what many people don't want to see. My biggest obstacle has been people who don't want to change their way of thinking or living, and conclude the animal rights agenda is extreme. I obtained a substantial grant from Bob Barker for the administration of a credit bearing animal advocacy program at the community college level. The momentum was great and the public wanted this. Nevertheless, the college administration then was not ready for such a progressive program. Another challenge is the emotional drain that can happen when you devote your life to animal protection and you realize the extent of institutionalized ignorance and apathy that exists. However, most people DO care, and WANT to know what they can do to make a difference. This gives me great hope.



Val with her beloved Yoda.

Who are your heroes or the people who have influenced you the most? Sue McDonough, retired NYS Police Investigator and animal cruelty expert, has taught me virtually all I know about animal cruelty law and investigation. She has given me great courage. When you know the law, you are not afraid to say what should be done. She really is my hero. Of course, my elderly parents with their simple values are my other rocks.

What are the biggest concerns we should have about animals? The biggest hurdle is humane education. It may ruffle feathers, but when people know what goes on, whether it is in the food industry, clothing, entertainment, science or with companion animals, something awakens in them. Knowledge is power. The biggest challenge is finding people with the courage to convey that we are not the only species that matters and that everything we do counts. When young people learn the realities, their priorities change. It is never too late to change course.

What is your biggest achievement(s)? To date, my biggest achievement is creating the Animal Law certificate program at HVCC and bringing in hundreds from the community to realize they have a voice; they can change the trajectory of their lives and the world. I saw a great quote about education – the greatest success is how you make people feel. I reached the core of many looking for direction. I still see former students working in the field, believing in themselves and their mission, because I equipped them with passion and facts. My other accomplishment is coming to terms with my husband's stage 4 lung cancer and accepting lack of control over the outcome, while maintaining a daily love of life. Words can't express this. My faith in a Power greater than us sustains me.

What advice would you give people who feel overwhelmed and defeated by the cruelty we see every day? Follow your heart, trust your instincts. Your work is among the greatest on the planet: speaking for those who can't. Take time out if you have to. I recharge my batteries during the summer and return in the fall with a renewed commitment to the work. Remember, it is a marathon, not a sprint.

What are your current and long-range goals? I plan to retire from HVCC in four years, teach animal law, lobby for animal protection laws, and live on the lake where I grew up. I would love to see the institution of statewide animal control including cat licensing, a crackdown on horse racing for the criminal enterprise it is, and greater acceptance of the sustainability of a vegan lifestyle. I hope my husband will be with me.

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