



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 16, 2009

Contact: Wayne Kasacek, (860) 384-2598

**Connecticut Department of Agriculture, State Animal Control Officers
Seize 14 Horses, Two Ponies, Three Mules, and Various Other Domestic Pet
Animals**

North Haven, CT - On December 16, 2009, State Department of Agriculture Animal Control Officers, with the assistance of the North Haven Municipal Animal Control Officers and North Haven Police, seized 14 horses, two (2) ponies, three (3) mules and various other domestic pet animals from the Rambling River Ranch, 138 Spring Street, North Haven, CT.

The criminal investigation which began October 6, 2008, was prompted by a complaint from a citizen concerned about the welfare and condition of the animals. State Animal Control Officers sought and obtained a search and seizure warrant allowing them to remove the animals. In the search and seizure warrant State Animal Control Officers allege that some of horses and mules were kept in conditions that contributed to poor body, skin, and hoof conditions. Some of the animals were not provided adequate and appropriate feed and the conditions observed constituted animal neglect. The investigation revealed that the some of the animals lacked proper veterinary and dental care and that some appeared to be suffering from skin infections, cracked and/or infected hooves and lower legs.

The Department has learned that in addition to animals owned by Gina Rapuano and Paul Novicki, Ms. Rapuano boarded animals owned by other individuals for a fee.

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The seized horses, ponies, and mules will be transported to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's large animal rescue facility, "Second Chance" located at the Gates Correctional Institution in Niantic, CT. The seized horses, ponies, and mules are being examined by a veterinarian retained by the Department and will be housed at "Second Chance" under the care of Connecticut Department of Agriculture staff with assistance from prison inmates who participate in work programs at "Second Chance". In addition to the livestock four (4) dogs and several other domestic pets were taken from the property to a local animal control shelter.

This is an ongoing investigation and State Animal Control Officers are working with the Attorney General's office in the civil case to gain custody of the animals and may ask the State's Attorney to pursue criminal animal cruelty charges.

Connecticut Department of Agriculture, Commissioner F. Philip Prelli remarked that "The Department has been aware of and has been monitoring this situation for some time. We have attempted to gain voluntary compliance on several occasions. As we watched these animals continue to lose weight, it became apparent that we needed to act. The animals will not be available for adoption until a court decides their disposition."

The Commissioner said monetary donations to help offset the costs of rehabilitation may be made by sending a check to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, 165 Capitol Avenue. Rm. G8-A, Hartford, CT 06106 and designating the money for the Animal Abuse Cost Recovery Account.

For more information on the "Second Chance" rehabilitation program visit: www.ct.gov/doag and click on "Programs & Services."

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