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**QUEENS MAN CHARGED WITH CRUELTY TO ANIMALS;**  
**MORE THAN TWO DOZEN SICK AND INJURED PITBULLS**  
**HOUSED IN DUNGEON-LIKE CONDITIONS IN RICHMOND HILL**

*All 27 Animals Were in Failing Health – Many with Healing Bite Marks;  
Defendant Accused of Breeding Dogs for Fighting,  
Faces Up to Four Years in Prison If Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz today announced that Andrew Cato, 59, has been charged in a 92-count criminal complaint with aggravated animal cruelty, prohibition of animal fighting and other crimes. The defendant allegedly bred dogs for fighting, as evidenced by numerous dog bite scars and wounds on some of the 27 dogs and the retrieval of dog fighting paraphernalia.

District Attorney Katz said, “Pets and animals are meant to be protected and nurtured. In Queens, I will hold accountable those who choose to abuse them instead. This defendant, who allegedly told the police he was a breeder, kept 27 pit-bulls in filthy and dungeonlike enclosures with little food, clean water, light, or ventilation. Several of the dogs bore dog bite wounds and scars typical of illegal dogfighting activities. The animals have now been rescued from the deplorable conditions the defendant allegedly subjected them to and can no longer be bred for dogfighting.”

Cato, of Richmond Hill, Queens, was arraigned yesterday before Queens Criminal Court Judge Denise Johnson on a complaint charging him with three counts of aggravated cruelty to animals, 35 counts of prohibition of animal fighting, 27 counts of failure to provide proper food and drink to impounded animal and 27 counts of overdriving, torturing and injuring animals; failure to provide sustenance. Judge Johnson ordered the defendant to return to court on September 8, 2021. If convicted, the defendant faces up to four years in prison.

According to the charges, said DA Katz, on July 28, 2021, defendant Cato directed a NYPD Detective, who was responding to neighbors’ complaints about barking dogs and bad smells, into a backyard garage located at 130-15 95<sup>th</sup> Ave. The officer observed 17 pit bull-type dogs inside the garage, which was not equipped with ventilation, had a very strong odor of feces and urine and was infested by flies.

The officer further observed that the dogs were housed individually inside concrete enclosures that were without proper bedding and soiled with urine and feces. Dirty water was only available inside of five of the enclosures.

Further, said DA Katz, the defendant then took the officer into the basement of the above-mentioned location where she observed 10 additional pit bull-like dogs also individually housed in concrete enclosures. This

area did not have fans or air conditioners, was extremely hot and had minimal air ventilation. This basement area also had a very strong odor of ammonia from urine and feces and had numerous flies. The paper bedding inside the enclosures were all soiled with urine and feces and only five enclosures had food that was contaminated with the urine and feces. None of the enclosures contained water.

Also observed and allegedly recovered from the location by the detective was a breeding stand and three “break sticks.” A breeding stand is typically used to immobilize the female to prevent the pit bulls from fighting when breeding. A break stick is a device inserted behind a dog’s molar to force the jaws apart and loosen the grip of the bite.

ASPCA veterinary and behavior experts conducted forensic exams on the dogs and determined that they all suffered from pain and discomfort due to various medical ailments, were intact and had dirty, stained, malodorous hair coats from living in a filthy environment with prolonged contact to urine and feces and lack of adequate grooming. ASPCA forensic exams revealed that some of the dogs had injuries consistent with dogfighting, including scarring. The ASPCA assisted in the rescue and removal of all the dogs and continues to provide ongoing medical and behavioral treatment and enrichment.

Howard Lawrence, the Vice President of the ASPCA Humane Law Enforcement said, “Working collaboratively with the NYPD and the Queen’s District Attorney’s Office to rescue these dogs, provide them with essential medical and behavioral treatment from ASPCA experts, and hold their alleged abusers accountable, represents how our partnership with the NYPD continues to prioritize and elevate animal welfare throughout New York City. Animal cruelty – including dogfighting – happens every day in every corner of the country, and we are committed to stopping this form of barbaric abuse and helping animals in crisis.”

The investigation was conducted by Detective Tara Cuccias of the NYPD’s Special Investigations Animal Cruelty Investigation Squad under the supervision of Lieutenant Adrian Ashby and under the overall supervision of Chief Michael Baldassano.

Assistant District Attorney Nicoletta J. Caferri, Chief of the District Attorney’s Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit, is prosecuting the case with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney Matthew Garber, under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Daniel A. Saunders.

*Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.*

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