



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Statement of the U.S. Attorney's Office Regarding the Civil Forfeiture Action Involving Approximately 50 Pit Bull Dogs

Many individuals and organizations have expressed concern about the fate of the approximately 50 pit bull dogs that were removed from Mr. Vick's property. In July, the United States filed a civil forfeiture action in federal court to ensure that regardless of the outcome of the related criminal case, these dogs would not be returned to the environment in which they were found.

Last week, the time for anyone to file a claim of ownership to these dogs expired, and no claims were filed. Later this week, we will ask the court to enter an order declaring that the dogs are now the property of the United States.

The statute which provides for the forfeiture of dogs involved in an "animal fighting venture" provides that after forfeiture, the court shall determine the disposition of the animals. In order to provide the court with complete information on the characteristics of the dogs and the available options, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has contracted with the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) to conduct an assessment of the dogs.

The ASPCA will lead a team of animal behavior experts in evaluating the dogs removed from Mr. Vick's property earlier this year. Based on these evaluations, recommendations will be made to the USDA regarding the disposition of the dogs. We anticipate the evaluations will be completed within about three weeks, and the government will thereafter make a recommendation to the court for the dogs' disposition.

The public can be assured that careful consideration will be given to the ultimate disposition of the dogs involved in this matter.

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