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**Eureka Man Pleads Guilty in Animal Cruelty Case**

On Thursday, August 04, 2011, Donovan Baltzley, 22, of Eureka, pled guilty to three counts of animal cruelty. Baltzley, who was on probation after pleading guilty to the same offense in 2008, faced and agreed to accept a five year state prison sentence.

“It appeared that Baltzley decided to plead guilty after Judge Watson ruled that the details of his prior guilty plea would be admissible during the trial,” noted Prosecuting Deputy District Attorney Jeremiah Ross. “The jury’s knowledge of the defendant’s particular pattern of behavior would have certainly played a role in the outcome of this case.”

Watson ruled that the information from the 2008 incident was admissible after Ross was able to prove that the recent deaths of three family dogs was consistent with the events in 2008 and that they indicated a specific pattern of behavior. In each incident

- The defendant was taken in by family that knew the defendant through their children
- The defendant became more controlling after living with the families
- There was conflict with the families but Baltzley remained in the home(s)
- The dogs started acting strangely in the defendant’s presence prior to suffering unnatural deaths

“This case very clearly indicates why it is so important for even the best intentioned people to be aware of who they let into their homes and into their lives. Tragically these families lost cherished family pets because of Mr. Baltzley,” said Humboldt County District Attorney Paul Gallegos.

Prosecutor Jeremiah Ross commended Detective Ron Harpham of the Eureka Police Department and veterinary pathologist W. L. Spangler DVM, PhD for their work on the case. “Detective Harpham had the vision and foresight to recognize Mr. Baltzley’s destructive behavioral patterns and Dr. Spangler did in invaluable job in helping us confirm that the animals did not die naturally and were victims of violent, tragic deaths,” he said.