

Michael K. Books, Sheriff
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Curtis T. Hill, Jr., Elkhart County Prosecuting Attorney, 34th Judicial Circuit
The Office of the Elkhart County Prosecutor
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Dear Sheriff Books and County Prosecutor Curtis T. Hill:

I would appreciate any update you can provide about the search for Mike Pifer, the Elkhart man who beheaded his neighbor Dennis Witte's five-week-old longhaired calico kitten. You may receive similar letters about this particularly coldhearted act. As you know, Pifer used a knife to sever the animal's head as "punishment" for defecating on the floor beside his motorcycle.

I respectfully ask you to keep this Elkhart Police investigation open. When Pifer is apprehended, please charge him with a class D felony count of animal cruelty and prosecute him to the fullest extent of the law. I urge you to seek the maximum three-year jail sentence and \$10,000 fine. In addition, please ensure Pifer undergoes psychiatric evaluation and counseling and is prohibited from owning or harboring animals in any context.

This man exhibits traits regarded as high-risk for future violence against animals and humans. Randall Lockwood, Ph.D., a frequent consultant to cruelty investigators, law enforcers, court officials and mental health professionals, assesses an offender's distinct style of animal abuse. Among qualities outlined in his "Factors in the Assessment of Dangerousness in Perpetrators of Animal Cruelty," Lockwood describes violence against small or non-threatening creatures unlikely to retaliate as a precursor to assaulting children, the elderly or disabled, or other vulnerable victims. Few creatures are more helpless than a five-week-old kitten.

Lockwood also cites *severity* and *intimacy* of injury inflicted (e.g. stabbing, mutilating, strangling) as more significant than remote actions such as shooting or poisoning. The perpetrator views victims as objects and may torment them to exert control over others. Pifer, who told police he'd grown weary of "all the cats in the neighborhood," justified his brutality as some bizarre form of animal control.

After the slaying, Pifer laughingly dangled the kitten's headless body before Witte and neighbor Bob Gilbert, with little regard for any repercussions. He then dumped the body in a trashcan, but preserved the head (like a trophy) inside his freezer. A sign in his window boasts: "Warning I don't call 911."

"The additional intimidation of written or verbal threats are strongly indicative of potential for escalated violence," Lockwood notes. "Displaying the body of a victim can be indicative of the use of such violence to gain feelings of power, control and domination — or to alarm or intimidate others. This should be considered a serious warning sign."

Violence rarely occurs in a vacuum. Please do not allow Mike Pifer to harm another living being. Thank you for your pursuit of justice in this disturbing case.

Sincerely,