

**Metro Animal Control Facility**

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Dear Officials of Nashville, Tennessee:

I respectfully ask for your utmost deliberation in the investigation of five youths who set fire to a gasoline-doused dog on June, 24, 2007 in north Nashville. I understand the boys, ages 9 to14, allegedly soaked the dog in gasoline, restrained him by his collar, and ignited him with a lighter.

Arthur Greer witnessed the screaming dog as he raced down a street engulfed in flames. "He tried to lick himself when he was burning and his face caught on fire," the retired Army sergeant told reporters.

I thank Animal Control Officers for pursuing aggravated animal cruelty charges and hope court officials levy the maximum penalty in the state of Tennessee. If convicted, please advocate jail or juvenile hall time for these troubled boys and ensure they undergo psychological counseling. Each should be barred from possessing or living alongside animals in any context.

Because the accused are so young, their indifference to suffering signifies a cry for help. Ken Trump of the National School Safety and Security Services advises parents and educators to view animal abuse as a key indicator of a seriously disturbed youth.

Indeed, adolescent pranks that victimize animals are a known precursor to aggressive crimes. Columbine High School shooter Eric Harris, 18, smashed mice with a crowbar and set them on fire. Washington D.C. serial killer Lee Boyd Malvo killed stray cats with a slingshot. Kip Kinkle blew up a cow and burned a live cat. He then shot 25 classmates and murdered his parents in Springfield, Oregon.

Robert Ressler, founder of the FBI's behavioral sciences unit, calls serial killers and other psychopathic criminals "the kids who never learned it's wrong to poke out a puppy's eyes." Randall Lockwood, Ph.D. — regularly enlisted to aid cruelty investigators, law enforcers, court officials and mental health professionals — deems violence against small, helpless or non-threatening creatures as a precursor to assaulting children, the elderly or disabled, and other vulnerable victims.

No one is more helpless than a domesticated animal. This poor dog fled from potential rescuers and has likely died from his horrible wounds. These boys pose a risk to other animals and humans in your community. At the very least, each requires extensive probation with behavioral rehabilitation and juvenile hall time. Please keep me informed of any progress in this case.

Thank you,