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Hon. District Attorney P. David Soares, Hon. Kenneth R. Bunzey & Hon. Richard M. Guilz, and Sheriff James L. Campbell:

Please accept my comments about Robert Bushnell, 50, of Woodstock Road, who confessed to police on 9/30/09 that he killed neighbor Amy Tubbs' two dogs.

Sheriff James Campbell said Bushnell transported Mocha, a 7-year-old chocolate Labrador retriever, and Rocky, a 5-year-old Alaskan malamute, to state property where he shot them. He fired two bullets into Rocky and a single bullet into Mocha. Bushnell claims the dogs had attacked his chickens, chased livestock, and posed a risk to his children.

I urge you to upgrade Bushnell's misdemeanor charges for animal torture and stealing to felony offenses. Under Buster's Law § 353-a., a person is guilty of aggravated cruelty to animals when...he or she intentionally kills...a companion animal...and it is done (ii) in an especially depraved or sadistic manner. While Buster's Law exempts "animals posing a threat to human safety or other animals," it calls for the act of killing to be "legally authorized."

Shooting two companion dogs at point blank range is "especially depraved." Furthermore, Bushnell took the law into his own hands when he killed Rocky and Mocha without legal consent. In fact, Amy Tubbs had tried to find out whose chickens her dogs had killed — but Bushnell never gave her the chance to make amends or better confine her dogs.

I hope you will recognize the gravity of Bushnell's crime and seek felony penalties of up to two years in prison. Bushnell ought to be barred from possessing or living with animals as well.

Officials should be concerned that Bushnell resorted to illegal violence to solve a problem. Violence against animals is a well-documented precursor to violence against humans — particularly vulnerable victims such as children, women or the elderly. Animal cruelty investigations often uncover domestic violence or other signs of a troubled family, P. Arkow notes in "Breaking the cycles of violence: A guide to multi-disciplinary interventions."

The deliberate slaughter of two companion animals qualifies as aggravated cruelty. Thank you for holding animal abusers accountable for their crimes.

Sincerely,