

Five Guilty in Major Dogfighting Ring

Organizations, volunteers care for hundreds of dogs rescued from Missouri and Illinois.

By John Schwartze

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Photographs courtesy

Humane Society of Missouri An "amazing team effort" on the part of some 200 paid staff and volunteers is ongoing to care for more than 400 dogs seized on July 8, 2009, after raids on 22 dogfighting operations in Missouri and Illinois, according to Jeane Jae, Humane Society of Missouri's communications director.

Of the 26 arrests made July 8, 2009, four Missouri men (Robert Hackman of Foley, Teddy Kiriakidis of Leasburg, Ronald Creach of Leslie and Michael Morgan of Hannibal) pled guilty to charges connected with the dogfighting raid on Sept. 14 in U.S. District court in St. Louis.

Morgan and Hackman both pled guilty to one felony count of conspiracy to commit federal offenses and one felony count of prohibitions against animal fighting ventures. Kiriakidis and Creach each pleaded guilty to one felony count of conspiracy to commit federal offenses. Sentencing is scheduled to take place in December for these men.

Jack Ruppel of Eldon, Mo., pled guilty to similar charges connected with the dogfighting raid on Sept. 4 in Jefferson City, Mo. His sentencing date has yet to be determined.

Only a few of the 407 dogs rescued in Missouri and Illinois had to be put down. Those were for medical reasons.

"We recognize that dogs coming from this background can have challenges, but we're working with rescue groups all over the country to evaluate the dogs and see which ones they can take so we can rehome as many as possible," Jae says.

One hundred puppies have been born since the raid.

The staff and volunteers are working tirelessly to feed, walk, socialize and attend to the veterinary needs of the dogs, she says.

Until forfeiture orders are signed by the courts to begin releasing the dogs for adoption and to various rescue organizations, the dogs will remain at the temporary shelter set up and being run by HSM near St. Louis.

Jae is unsure at this point how long the temporary shelter will continue to house the dogs after the orders have been signed. She speculates that whatever dogs have not already been adopted or transferred may be taken to the Humane Society of Missouri's permanent shelters to await adoption or transfer.

More than 500 dogs were rescued after an 18-month investigation into a dogfighting ring that spanned several states.

According to sources, this is believed to be the largest dogfighting ring case in the nation's history.

John Schwartze is the Associate Editor of DOG FANCY.