

Sheriff Candidate Faces Charges For Shooting Dog

Deputy marshal in Colorado allegedly shot a German Shepherd Dog multiple times at close range.

A candidate for Montezuma County, Colo., sheriff is facing charges for allegedly using excessive force during a dog-shooting incident at a Mancos residence.

The county district attorneys office filed the charges May 8 against Mancos Deputy Marshal Sam Sparks for a March 8 incident in which he allegedly shot a dog at least three times with a semi-automatic weapon in close proximity to a residence. The German Shepherd Dog later died.

Sparks, 58, is an independent candidate for county sheriff in Novembers general election. So far, he has refused to comment on the charges. However, the dogs former owner, Angela Gilstrap, said in a March 20 statement that Sparks exceeded his authority by firing up to five shots on her property at the canine.

Sparks was charged with four criminal complaints. The primary charge, aggravated cruelty to animals, is a felony with a potential of one year to 18 months in jail and a fine of \$1,000 to \$100,000, according to Assistant District Attorney Andy Hughes.

The second count, cruelty to animals, is a misdemeanor and carries a possible punishment of six to 18 months in prison. The third and fourth charges are second-degree official misconduct, which is a petty offense in each case. The deputys first court appearance is scheduled for 9 a.m. May 31 in Montezuma County Court.

Posted: May 10, 2006, 5 a.m. EST