

# LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

## **Scott brothers raise hackles in shelter crowd**

**By Ashley Meeks Sun-News reporter**

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To see photos from the protest, click [here](#).

LAS CRUCES -- Four pit bulls, one court injunction and more than 20 demonstrators awaited Daron and Duryea Scott on Tuesday at the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley.

The El Paso twins left with four of their dogs; relinquished three; allowed one dog, "Bruno," to remain with its foster home; and were prohibited from taking five others by court order, said county Animal Control Supervisor Curtis Childress. The court injunction, filed by Daron Scott's former employer, the Gadsden Independent School District, claims five of the dogs in lieu of a debt of \$20,000 in legal bills incurred after the former teacher's contract was not renewed, Childress said.

"These dogs have been seized," Childress said.

Dozens of pit bulls were seized from the Scotts almost two and a half years ago as part of an investigation into dog fighting charges. Those charges were dropped last month after the New Mexico Court of Appeals ruled the search warrant in the case had been obtained improperly. The Scotts have maintained the dogs were part of a show dog breeding operation.

On Tuesday, the brothers refused to speak with news media or answer questions about the dogs' future from protesters carrying signs, asking "Have you no shame?" and proclaiming "Animal abusers are losers." Some stood quietly -- others shouted accusations of "murderer."

Marilyn Grayson of Las Cruces held a sign urging, "Don't let them get off Scott (sic) free" on one side and a picture of her own pit bull, Ariel, on the other.

"They let the Scott brothers get off," Grayson said. Pit bulls, she said, "are loving, caring dogs and the Scott brothers should take care of them like that."

Grayson said it was "disgraceful" that the brothers were able to get their dogs back.

Michel Meunier carried a sign spelling out "Pitiful Innocent Tortured Souls" and calling the dogs "one of God's most abused creatures."

"We're here for two reasons: To implore the Scotts, the past is past, the dogs are legally theirs, but not to take them elsewhere," Meunier said, adding that the out-of-state locations the dogs are reported to be destined for will result in "further abuse." She continued, "It would be nice if they found appropriate placement for them."

Last week, the Scotts picked up 12 dogs and denied they were the owners of five others at the shelter, which were transported from the shelter by county animal control officers Monday, said shelter director Dr. Beth Vesco-Mock.

Childress said the five dogs covered under Tuesday's injunction will be assessed for adoption and any fees from that process would go against the judgment.

"At least we got them to donate one dog," Childress said. "They were at least considering some of the dogs that had been raised with a family, allowing them to stay there. There's one family out there that's going to be happy, that's going to be able to keep its dog."

The court order gave one of the affected dogs' foster families a glimmer of hope, said Do-a Ana County sheriff's investigator Bo Nevarez and his wife, Antoinette Nevarez, who have been raising Billie Jean since 2007.

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"That's the best Christmas gift I got, being able to keep my dog," said Antoinette Nevarez. "I was crying when they told me they wouldn't take them back (on Tuesday), I was just ecstatic. I was crying, because that's my baby. I raised her as a puppy and she's a beautiful dog. She's not mean."

The Nevarezes keep two teacup Chihuahuas inside and a Rottweiler and a German shepherd outside, she said. Billie Jean, she said, is affectionate with all of them.

"That was my biggest concern. She was not raised to be a mean dog at all," she said. "This is my best Christmas ever, just being able to keep her."

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