

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

Dogs seized in Scott brothers investigation face uncertain future

By Ashley Meeks Sun-News reporter

Posted: 12/19/2009 05:21:04 PM MST

LAS CRUCES - "We've got Feathers," Curtis Herring said Friday. "And Larry. He's an awesome dog. He's brother's with Mo - Mo's the dog that's got a deformed leg. He was such a sweet dog. He's not here."

Herring, a supervisor at the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley, finds Ginger Snap, Johnnie and a tan-and-white female whose name tag can't be found at the moment. It could be Libby, or Gracie.

Those are the pit bulls the Scott brothers, Daron and Duryea, have said don't belong to them. The county says they're among dozens of dogs seized from the Scotts more than two years ago - when the dogs were puppies - 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 had been obtained improperly.

The Scotts have maintained the dogs were part of a show dog breeding operation. On Dec. 15, they picked up from the center 12 dogs, which they said would be going to Virginia, Houston, El Paso and Mexico, according to county animal control director Curtis Childress.

"The other ones, I hate to say it, are dog-aggressive," said Animal Services Center director Beth Vesco-Mock. "I won't adopt out a dog that's dog-aggressive. That would be very irresponsible of me. They will attack each other and they will fight and they will attack the other dog until they kill it."

Due to their aggressiveness the dogs each have their own cages, which usually house two dogs, until Vesco-Mock receives paperwork from the courts releasing them.

And then?

"The minute we get the paperwork, they'll probably be put down," Herring admits, which he said is tough to do with dogs the center staff has cared for since they were six- and seven-weeks old. "Several are real timid and scared. They won't even come to the front of the cage. But as far as people, an adopted dog needs to come to the front of the cage to greet someone and say, 'I want to come home!' They cower like they've been beaten, which they never were."

The dogs were picked up from properties the Scotts owned in Chaparral and El Paso, where they now live, Childress said. For almost three years, the county has given them their shots and veterinary exams, cleaned their kennels daily, fed and watered them and fitted them with microchips.

"Before we say, 'Hey, these dogs are not suitable for adoption,' we want to make sure we give the dogs every chance we can," said Childress. "So, we're going to assess them one more time to make that determination."

More than a dozen dogs are at the center now. The brothers are scheduled to pick up eight or nine dogs from the shelter at 1 p.m. Tuesday. But they will leave behind the ones they say are not theirs.

"We'll go through the last round of giving the dogs back to them and then we'll kind of go from there," Childress said.

Herring said it's almost inevitable the remaining dogs will be euthanized.

"It breaks your heart," he said. "It definitely breaks your heart. More than likely, I'll go out back and cry."

Ashley Meeks can be reached at ameeks@lcsun-news.com; (575) 541-5462