

## **Man allegedly starved animals**

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LAS CRUCES - An East Mesa man has been charged with starving his horse and dog so badly that four of the dog's five puppies died.

Armando Gomez, 51, of the 5900 block of Calle Plomo, was charged Thursday with two felony counts of extreme animal cruelty and one count of misdemeanor animal cruelty.

A Doña Ana Sheriff's Office animal control officer in August reported finding Gomez's chestnut mare so skinny that its ribs, hip bones and back bones were visible, according to documents filed in court by Do-a Ana sheriff's investigator Robyn Gojkovich. After the officer advised Gomez to feed the horse more and have a veterinarian check it, the officer noticed a female dog, which also looked "very thin," chained next to Gomez's trailer with no shade or shelter for herself or her five puppies.

An officer sent to follow up on the report a few weeks later found the horse had not been visited by a vet and was now "emaciated," as was the mother dog and her puppies, who still had no shelter or shade.

Gomez told investigators he didn't "know why the dog and puppies are so skinny, but he understands it's his responsibility and he knows it is not right."

The man who gave Gomez the horse told investigators when he gave the 5-year-old mare to Gomez, she was in good health and possibly pregnant. Two other horses owned by the man were in good health, with good body condition.

After four of the puppies died, a forensic veterinarian who examined the animals said they "appear to be victims of severe, prolonged starvation," with distended stomachs and chronic malnutrition.

Gomez has not been arrested, according to his indictment paperwork.

An indictment is only an accusation. All criminal defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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