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June 10, 2009

Honorable Christine Pate
Riverside County Superior Court
30755-D Auld Road
Murrieta, CA 92563

RE: People v Ricky Donell Jones, Case No. SWF 027012
Date of Sentencing: June 12, 2009

Via Fax to Correspondence Desk: (951) 304-5250

Dear Judge Pate:

I am writing regarding Ricky Donell Jones, who was found guilty after a jury trial, of felony cruelty to animals, in violation of CA PENAL § 597(a). His offense was brought to the attention of the Animals and Society Institute because of our work related to the connection between animal cruelty and human violence. I am a psychologist who helped develop a psychological program called AniCare, the only model specifically designed to assess and treat animal abusers.

It is my understanding that this offense carries a penalty of imprisonment in state prison, a fine, or both. In the alternative, you may impose a probationary sentence, which may include jail time, a fine or both; and which results in the defendant being assigned to a county probation officer. Finally, I understand that if a defendant is granted probation, the statute directs the court to order psychological counseling.

Because of the disturbing nature of this defendant's offense, I respectfully suggest that the AniCare treatment program be considered by the court and the Probation Department, *if he receives a probationary sentence*. Please note that the Animals and Society Institute is not advocating probation; further, we understand that if he is sentenced to prison, the state authorities will decide what counseling, if any, that Mr. Jones would receive.

It has been well established that persons who commit violent acts against animals are often predisposed to committing similar acts against human beings. Animal cruelty is an expression of antisocial behavior and can predict or coincide with violence toward people.

Animal cruelty is often present in households where domestic violence also occurs, and is often used to intimidate and/or punish vulnerable members of society. In this case, the evidence shows that Mr. Jones stabbed Jack, the family's 6 month old Australian cattle dog; according to the testimony of a veterinarian, the puppy suffered a collapsed lung and died slowly. There was evidence that this occurred in the context of a domestic dispute, and that his girlfriend's 12 year old son was home at the time of Jack's killing. Further,

there was evidence that Mr. Jones killed the family cat several weeks before Jack died (although he was not charged) and his record includes convictions for violent and assaultive behavior toward people.

The California statute requires defendants convicted of cruelty to animals receiving probation to undergo psychological treatment “designed to evaluate and treat behavior or conduct disorders.” The AniCare program was developed in 1999 by a team of psychologists and other social welfare and legal professionals as a means of addressing the root causes of violent behavior. Although anger management is often an issue, a broader multitheme and multiskills intervention is necessary to stop recidivism and prevent the escalation of harm to others, including spouses and children, AniCare has been incorporated into treatment programs and judicial sentencing in 29 states, using counselors specifically trained for dealing with felony animal cruelty offenders. There are separate AniCare programs for juveniles and adults.

In this case, the evidence suggests that Mr. Jones’s violent behavior could continue to endanger other people with whom he comes in contact. He appears to me to be a prime candidate for further violence, which makes psychological assessment and counseling all the more urgent.

I am available to provide you with whatever information you may need when considering sentencing. The ASI has trained counselors available for referral, and I am personally available to offer assistance. Mr. Jones’s violent actions must be taken seriously and addressed in a manner that will help prevent their recurrence against any individual, human or animal.

We appreciate your consideration and thank you for your attention. Please feel free to contact me at any time; my contact information is below.

Sincerely,



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cc: Jennifer Strona, Assistant District Attorney, via fax: (951) 304-5405
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