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## 94 of 110 dogs seized in Feb. are euthanized in one day

**By Erica Meltzer**

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Pima Animal Care Center euthanized 94 dogs Thursday that were seized earlier this year from breeding operations police say were training and selling them for fighting rings.

The euthanized dogs were from a group of 110 sheriff's deputies removed from a breeding operation near West Orange Grove Road and North Sandario Road in the Picture Rocks area in February.

Deputies hit three other breeding operations that day in coordinated raids that were the result of a yearlong investigation.

The investigation began when the Sheriff's Department received tips from the Chicago police and the Humane Society of the United States.

The euthanized dogs belonged to Mahlon Thatcher Patrick and Emily Elizabeth Dennis, the owners of the Picture Rocks kennel. They were indicted along with four others on 69 felony and misdemeanor counts alleging animal cruelty, dog-fighting and failure to obtain licenses.

Lawyers for the defendants say their clients are legitimate breeders.

The seized dogs all were held as evidence, but earlier this week, a judge gave permission to euthanize the remaining dogs seized from the Picture Rocks property. The county still has 20 dogs from another property.

Seven dogs already had been euthanized for medical problems, including a puppy that was mauled by its litter-mates.

Nine dogs from that impound were adopted by rescue groups, as were four from other impounds.

It cost the shelter about \$1,500 a day to care for the pit bulls.

"That's not to mention the heart and soul," said Vicki Ann Duraine, public-services supervisor for the Animal Care Center. "It was a brutal day," she added.

County officials predicted most of the animals would be euthanized because they were too aggressive.

But the Pima Animal Care put out a nationwide call for experienced pit-bull rescuers to determine if any of the dogs were adoptable.

They wanted groups with at least three years' experience and \$1 million in liability coverage that had experience with pit bulls, including former fighting dogs.

Only two outside groups responded.

Diane Jessup, an experienced rescuer who trains pit bulls to work as police dogs, took four dogs, and Bad Rap, a San Francisco-based rescue organization that fostered several dogs from former NFL player Michael Vick's dog-fighting operation, took six.

"We wish we could take more because so many deserve a second chance, but we're limited in the number of foster spots that we have," said Donna Reynolds, executive director of Bad Rap, in an e-mail.

Reynolds said the rescuers looked for dogs that were not overly aggressive to other dogs and who were brave and optimistic, meaning they still could be socialized and adapt to the outside world.

The Humane Society of Southern Arizona took three dogs.

It hopes eventually to place them in good homes, as does Bad Rap. Bad Rap is training two of the dogs to work as therapy animals.

Jenny Rose, a spokeswoman for the Humane Society, said she believes the county shelter did the best it could under difficult circumstances.

"Obviously, it's very unfortunate, but Animal Care did everything they could to place them," she said. "It's hard to say why there wasn't more interest. Those dogs really were the victims of their circumstances."

- Contact reporter Erica Meltzer at 807-7790 or [emeltzer@azstarnet.com](mailto:emeltzer@azstarnet.com).

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