



OFFICE OF  
**STATE ATTORNEY**  
FIRST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA

August 15, 2014

**PRESS RELEASE**

William Eddins, State Attorney for the First Judicial Circuit, announced that on August 14, 2014, Jesse Eugene Morris was sentenced to 22.2 months in State Prison followed by three years of probation following his plea of no contest to Cruelty to Animals and Tampering with Evidence.

The case arose when law enforcement responded to Morris' residence on May 9, 2014, following a 911 call by a neighbor who saw Morris beating his dog with a piece of lumber. The caller observed Morris holding the dog down and repeatedly striking it with a piece of lumber.

Morris originally denied the allegations and claimed he had given the dog to his father but then changed his story to say he gave it to his brother three days prior.

Morris eventually admitted kicking the dog, which he described as discipline, then throwing it out of the fence gate. Morris provided consent for law enforcement to search the residence and a closet in the master bedroom that had numerous heavy items in front of it. Morris finally admitted the dog was in the closet.

When law enforcement found the dog, she had obvious injuries on her face, neck and foot and was unable to walk. Morris later admitted that he knew the dog was in the closet and that he was going to get rid of it when law enforcement left the residence.

Once his prison sentence is complete, Morris will be on probation for three years, during which time he is prohibited from owning any animals. He is also required to undergo a psychological evaluation and complete any recommended treatment and was assessed a \$2,500 fine.

The investigation was conducted by the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office and the Panhandle Animal Welfare Society (PAWS). Assistant State Attorney Clifton Drake prosecuted the case. The sentence was imposed by Circuit Judge John Brown.

Any questions can be directed to Assistant State Attorney Clifton Drake at (850) 651-7260.