

## Animal People News

<http://www.animalpeoplenews.org/05/7/tsg.petastaffersface7.05.htm>

### **JULY/AUGUST 2005**

#### **PETA staffers face 62 felony cruelty counts in North Carolina**

WINTON, N.C.—The scheduled first court appearance of PETA staffers Adria Joy Hinkle and Andrew Benjamin Cook on multiple cruelty charges was on July 19, 2005 postponed until August 16.

Hinkle, 27, and Cook, 24, are charged with a combined 62 counts of felony cruelty to animals and 16 counts of illegal disposal of animal remains.

Police sources have indicated that other persons associated with PETA may be charged as result of ongoing investigation.

The court date was delayed, reported Darren Freeman of the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, because the prosecution was “waiting for lab results on chemicals found in a van the two suspects were using when they were arrested, and the results to determine the cause of death of one of the animals.”

Ahoskie, North Carolina police detective Jeremy Roberts told Freeman that the van was registered to PETA.

Roberts announced the next day that the tests had confirmed that the chemicals were ketamine and pentobarbital. Ketamine is commonly used to immobilize animals before surgical procedures or lethal injection. Pentobarbital is the standard drug used for lethal injection. Both drugs are regulated by the federal Drug Enforcement Agency, and in North Carolina may only be purchased and used by a licensed veterinarian.

Ketamine is also known as “the date-rape drug,” while pentobarbital is a barbituate derivative with street value to addicts.

Hinkle and Cook were arrested on June 15, 2005. Ahoskie police and Bertie County sheriff’s deputies investigating the discovery of 60 to 70 animal carcasses in dumpsters during the preceding four weeks said they saw Hinkle and Cook dump 18 dead dogs and found the remains of 13 more in their van.

PETA staff had been taking animals from pounds in Bertie County since 2001 and nearby Northampton County since 2004.

Freeman and Seth Seymour of the Virginian-Pilot reported that PETA president Ingrid Newkirk called Hinkle “The Mother Teresa of animals,” but suspended her for 90 days. PETA said Cook was not suspended.

Newkirk and domestic animal rescue chief Daphna Nachminovitch told news media and concerned animal advocates in a flurry of statements during the next several days that dumping the dead animals in garbage bins violated PETA policy and was done without their knowledge, but insisted that PETA had never concealed that most of the animals it took from the North Carolina shelters would be killed.

Newkirk and Nachminovitch claimed that PETA killed North Carolina animals by lethal injection so that they would not be “drowned in floods,” shot, or gassed, detailing in one statement a decade-long dispute with Yadkin County over use of a locally made carbon monoxide chamber.

But the animals involved in the case against Hinkle and Cook came from other counties—and were not all from pounds.

Wrote Freeman and Seymour, “Among the dead animals authorities found a female cat and her two ‘very adoptable’ kittens taken from Ahoskie Animal Hospital, veterinarian Patrick Proctor said.” Stated Proctor, “These were just kittens we were trying to find homes for. PETA said they would do that.”

## **EARLIER REPORTS**

ANIMAL PEOPLE in mid-2004 received detailed complaints from several North Carolina no-kill shelter volunteers and one ex-PETA employee who charged that PETA was taking animals from them who had been sterilized and vaccinated in preparation for adoption, promising to place them in homes, and then refused to account for them. The volunteers believed the animals were being killed. The ex-PETA employee affirmed their suspicions, but the complainants had no physical evidence to support their case.

“The arrests have left local animal rescuers with more questions than answers,” summarized Luci Weldon of The Warren Record.

Macon animal rescuer Ruth Brown told Weldon that “In December 2003, while she was working with Rainbow Rescue, a no-kill organization in Roanoke Rapids, she conducted e-mail correspondence with an individual who described herself as being active in animal rescue and who used the Community Animal Project (CAP), run by PETA, to provide foster care for the rescued animals.

“I thought it was the answer from heaven,” Brown recounted.

Wrote Weldon, “Brown said that she was told that local animals transferred to PETA would be prepared for potential adoption. As animals were given to PETA, Brown said she had contact with a representative of CAP in Norfolk, where PETA is headquartered, as well as contact with Adria Hinkle.”

Said Brown, “We asked them about the animals and they said they only had to put one to sleep because of congenital heart failure,” Brown said. “We questioned them on several occasions. They reassured us that the animals were adopted.”

Continued Weldon, “Brown said that Warren County animal rescuers held fundraising events to pay for spaying and neutering and other needs related to the care of the animals transferred to PETA.” Brown became suspicious in late spring 2004 “after her original contact arrived in a large truck which contained over 80 animals,” Weldon added.

A fellow volunteer followed the truck to Ahoskie, Brown told Weldon, but “was not allowed inside a building in Ahoskie where the animals were taken,” Weldon summarized. The volunteer did enter the building later and found syringe caps and blood.

“In June of 2004, several local animal rescuers decided to cut ties with PETA, Brown said, and a Rainbow Rescue representative said last week that her organization “will definitely not have anything to do with PETA,” Weldon wrote.

Brown’s account closely paralleled those that ANIMAL PEOPLE had received. She told Weldon that Warren County rescuers sent approximately 1,000 animals to PETA in about six months.

“We had faith,” Brown concluded. “They told us they were fostering, vetting, networking these animals. Isn’t this deception? We believed in them.”

While claiming to oppose cruel methods of killing animals, PETA is the last major animal advocacy group in the U.S. that overtly opposes neuter/return feral cat control and no-kill sheltering.

In September 2003, for example, PETA tried to block a neuter/return program proposed to the city of Newport News by Cat Rescue Inc., the Animal Resource Foundation, and Meower Power Feral Cat Coalition.

PETA and Meower Power had clashed before. ANIMAL PEOPLE in March 1998 published the allegation of Norfolk-area cat rescuer John Newton that a hit squad led initially by Ingrid Newkirk herself had for three years trapped cats from neuter/return colonies supervised by Meower Power and took many to their deaths at animal control shelters.

Newkirk did not respond to ANIMAL PEOPLE questions on that occasion, but confirmed to Michael Barakat of Associated Press in July 2000 that her staff killed 1,325 of the 2,103 dogs and cats they received in 1999—63%, above the regional animal control norm of 58%.

Then, according to Virginia state records, PETA in 2003 killed 1,911 of 2,225 animals received: 86%.

Although PETA is not a shelter organization, it killed more animals each year than 75% of the animal control shelters in Virginia.

Following the Barakat expose, PETA agreed to fund three mobile sterilization clinics in Virginia, operated by the Houston-based Spay-Neuter Assistance Program, whose first Virginia clinic was funded by the Best Friends Animal Society.

Newkirk had in February 2000 media statements called the Best Friends “No More Homeless Pets” drive to make Utah a no-kill state “at best, naive.”

With investment of \$8.27 million through June 2005 from Maddie’s Fund, Best Friends assembled a coalition including 25 rescue groups, 54 animal control agencies, 93 private practice veterinary clinics, and the Humane Society of Utah, who together have subsequently cut Utah shelter killing by 29%, boosting adoptions by 56%.

Newkirk ripped “No More Homeless Pets” after Best Friends cofounder Michael Mountain and two other Best Friends staff members asked PETA about the Barakat article.

Newkirk “declined to meet with us,” Mountain told ANIMAL PEOPLE. “Other staffers at PETA said that they routinely kill the animals that they pick up,” Mountain continued. “We have received unsolicited reports from former PETA staff, describing how they joined because they wanted to help animals, only to find that they were sent out to kill them.

We have also heard from numerous sources who were visited by people calling themselves PETA volunteers,” Mountain said, “offering to ‘find a good home’ for homeless pets, and saying that the animals would be taken to a ‘PETA shelter.’

“These people discovered too late that there is no PETA shelter and that no one at PETA would even tell them what had become of the animals. Local rescue groups reported that PETA basically competes with them, trying in many cases to kill the animals before they can be rescued,” Mountain charged.

About six months after the Barakat expose appeared, PETA in 2000 sent euthanasia technician Teresa Gibbs to the no-kill Visakha SPCA, of Visakhapatnam, India, as a donated “shelter manager.” Seeking to undo the Visakha SPCA no-kill policy, Gibbs did severe harm to the organization’s donor, staff, and community relations before being fired. Gibbs then joined the Animal Birth Control program managed by Ahimsa of Mumbai, and did similar damage.

“We do not advocate ‘right to life’ for animals,” Newkirk handwrote on a post card to neuter/return and no-kill sheltering proponent Nathan Winograd, who then directed the Law & Advocacy Department for the San Francisco SPCA and now does shelter consulting from San Diego.

A former criminal prosecutor, Winograd offered his services pro bono to the North Carolina prosecution.

## **ANIMAL ADVOCATES RESPOND**

“At a press conference following the arrest of the two PETA employees,” the Best Friends web site editorialized, “PETA president Ingrid Newkirk said, ‘PETA believes euthanasia is the kindest gift to a dog or cat unwanted and unloved.’ We simply couldn’t disagree more. The kindest gift to a homeless animal is a good home.”

Wrote Friends of Animals legal director Lee Hall, “FoA would like to state that the Ahooskie killings are not euthanasia, and are a serious affront to animal rights. Animal advocates have no business killing healthy sheltered animals. People who engage in such conduct—regardless of killing or disposal methods—convey the message that they and their supporters have accepted a reprehensible practice.

“Alternatives to the cycle of breeding and killing do exist,” Hall added, pointing out that FoA has subsidized sterilization of more than two million animals since 1957.

Wrote Kanak Roy, M.D. of the Animal Aid Alliance in Virginia Beach, in a commentary typical of many that ANIMAL PEOPLE received from activists around the world, “I have had disagreements with Newkirk in the past, but regardless of her troubling philosophy, I have continued to defend her publicly. I have lobbied several local news commentators on her behalf. However, the belief that PETA’s unconscionable actions are in support of animal welfare, and the idea that they are any way reducing suffering, is pathological.” —M.C.

*Merritt Clifton - Animal People*