

*** NEWS RELEASE ***

SOLEDAD MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO BURNING FAMILY DOG ALIVE

August 31, 2018

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CONTACT: Robin Duffy, Deputy District Attorney
(831) 755-5412**

District Attorney Dean D. Flippo announced today that Soledad resident Devonte Sirwet, age 22, entered pleas of no contest to three felony charges: first degree residential burglary, arson and felony animal abuse. Both the arson and burglary charges are strike convictions under California's Three Strikes law. Sirwet will receive six years and eight months in prison when he is sentenced on October 18, 2018.

In December 2017, Sirwet was kicked out of his mother's home due to his escalating substance abuse and anger issues. Sirwet then returned to her home at approximately 8:30am on March 27, 2018, snuck inside while his mother and her boyfriend were upstairs, and stole "Kato," the family dog. Kato was described as a protective dog who loved his family and had a particularly close bond with Sirwet. There were no signs of forced entry or a struggle; it is presumed Kato went willingly with Sirwet.

Moments later, a witness heard what he described as a terrible screaming sound. He looked over his back fence and saw Sirwet pour two bottles of lighter fluid on Kato and set him alight. Sirwet then fled to a waiting vehicle, leaving Kato to burn alive.

Soledad police officers arrived within moments. Kato suffered burns over 90% of his body but was still alive. Kato's injuries were appalling; his collar had melted into his neck, his skin had been burned so deeply that bone and subcutaneous layers of tissue were exposed, and his ears had partly disintegrated. Soledad Police Department Humane Officer Cecilio Lozano transported Kato immediately to a local vet, who euthanized him in the parking lot to end his tremendous suffering.

The District Attorney's Office would like to acknowledge Humane Officer Cecilio Lozano, Officer Gustavo Gomez, and Sergeant Lionel Munguia with the Soledad Police Department, Humane Officer Andriea Castellanos and Humane Investigations Supervisor Marty Opseth with the SPCA of Monterey County, Monterey County Sheriff's Deputy Rodrigo Lopez, and District Attorney Investigator Peter Austen for their extraordinary efforts to achieve justice for Kato.

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SPCA Statement:

"The SPCA for Monterey County is thankful to the DA's office and local law enforcement for taking on this horrific case; we are also thankful to our Humane Officers for their diligence in

providing the evidence to make this the only possible outcome. While none of this can bring Kato back or erase what he suffered, at least we know other animals will not suffer at his hands. This is what we are here for, all thanks to our incredible community and supporters.

If the public has concerns about an animal that is being neglected or cruelly treated, we urge them to call our Humane Investigations Department or submit a report online at spcamc.org - all reports are confidential.”

