

## News

7.  A fine in the amount of \_\_\_\_\_  Pursuant to Ala. Code § \_\_\_\_\_  
 Restitution in the amount of \$ Reserved  
Restitution to be paid to: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Defendant will be required to successfully complete/comply with requirements of:  
 CRO  Anger Management  Driving School  Ignition Interlocking Dev  
 Defendant shall have no contact with the victim(s)  
 Other: Δ is prohibited from poss and dog or cat  
Failure to complete/comply with these requirements may result in imposition of sentence.
6. Defendant shall plead guilty to the following charges and pay all fines and costs as indicated:
- |  | <u>Fine</u> | plus court costs |
|--|-------------|------------------|
|--|-------------|------------------|

A pet possession ban – apparently Blount County’s first – was ordered on June 4 in a Blountsville dog hoarding case, as seen on the court filing above.

# County issues first pet possession ban

By [Kristin Yarbrough](#)

June 11, 2025

Published in the [Blount Countian](#) and Shared by [WVTM 13](#) on June 18, 2025

“Defendant is prohibited from possessing a dog or cat.” With nine handwritten words on a June 4 plea agreement, Blount County gained footing in the animal cruelty crisis affecting hundreds of pets in homes and yards across the county.

In the absence of those nine words, nearly 100% of animal hoarders begin collecting animals again.

This time, Blount County said no. No, you have lost the privilege to own animals. No, we will not rescue another 10, 20, 50 emaciated dogs from your property. No, we won’t once again wear hazmat suits and respirators to collect your cats amid ammonia-thick air, while walking through feces. No, we won’t put ourselves through the anguish for having to euthanize the animals whose severe injuries, illness, or birth defects were created or went untreated because of your choices.

In nine words, Blount County said we have higher standards for the people and animals in our community.

To the recollection of multiple local and state officials, it was a first: the first time a possession ban was ordered by a Blount County court. The owners of 43 dogs recovered from a Blountsville property agreed to never again possess dogs or cats here.

In 22 states, possession bans are mandated in animal cruelty convictions, according to a [2024 Animal Legal Defense Fund report](#). While Alabama has no such requirement, bans may be issued at the discretion of the court.

In the Blountsville case, the ban was part of a plea agreement prepared by Patrick Hubauer, a prosecutor in the office of District Attorney Pamela Casey, and authorized by District Court Judge Sherry C. Burns.

This advance came on the heels of another Blountsville hoarding case involving a defendant entangled in animal cruelty since at least 2008. In November 2023, animal welfare officials stayed through the night to trap 62 dogs. This February, the man surrendered an additional 20 dogs. Yet the guilty plea included no restrictions on pet ownership.

The man's neighbors were shocked at the absence of a possession ban. It was those neighbors, through their calls to Blount County Dispatch, who made it possible to remove the dogs before the situation got worse.

Getting worse is what hoarding situations do when left unchecked. Unsterilized pets multiply. A compulsion to "save" brings in more animals, despite the inability to care for existing pets.

Hoarding behavior results from a person's mental distortions. Rarely do hoarders see that their behavior is damaging or acknowledge that they need help.

Sometimes, to make a few bucks for ballooning food costs, puppies or kittens are sold to unsuspecting families on Facebook, at flea markets, or in front of Walmart. Those animals may soon give indications of their past, in the form of genetic issues caused by inbreeding or aggression from having to compete for food and attention. Shelters and rescue organizations face the same challenges, as well as steep vet bills, difficult placements, and the necessity of euthanasia.

Impacts extend into the neighborhood and larger community. The longer the situation goes unchecked, the more animals are affected by increasingly severe neglect. The greater the impacts and expense to county, to the individuals who step in to help, to neighbors, and to the pet owners themselves.

Red flags can include refusing to allow entrance to the home, ongoing acquisition or breeding, failing to properly care for animals, denying that there is a problem, and turning down offers of help.

“Heartbreaking scenes like these must be avoided,” urged a [Sheriff’s Office press release](#). “It is inhumane to allow dogs to merely exist; they require care and nurturing to ensure their health and well-being.”

Blount County residents can help by [recognizing the signs of hoarding](#) and by reporting without delay to Blount County Dispatch, 205-625-4913. Anonymous reports can be made to the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) at 205-274-5200.

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