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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SHELBY COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE INVESTIGATES MEMPHIS
ANIMAL SHELTER AT REQUEST OF DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

**DEPUTIES EXECUTE SEARCH WARRANT OF SHELTER,
TEMPORARILY SECURE FACILITY DURING INVESTIGATION**

MEMPHIS, TN – Shelby County District Attorney Bill Gibbons and Shelby County Sheriff Mark Luttrell announced Tuesday that deputies with the Sheriff’s Office had executed a search warrant at the City of Memphis Animal Shelter located at 3456 Tchulahoma Road and temporarily secured the facility as part of an investigation into alleged animal abuse and cruelty. District Attorney Gibbons requested the Sheriff’s Office investigation of the City of Memphis Animal Shelter earlier this month after receiving a tip from a citizen on the conditions at the shelter.

According to the search warrant, “detectives have learned that some animals have been deprived of food and water while at the Memphis Animal Shelter...” and while in the shelter’s care, “some dogs have been starved to the point of requiring euthanasia.” According to the search warrant, some of the dogs “are involved in court cases involving dog fighting and have been marked ‘Hold for Court.’” Additionally, the warrant says that shelter employees keep “dogs that are to be quarantined for rabies with dogs that are not required to be quarantined in the same kennel.”

“The information we received about the conditions of the Memphis Animal Shelter clearly warranted a criminal investigation, and it is very possible that one or more individuals could face criminal charges based on the outcome of the investigation,” said District Attorney Gibbons.

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“Animals bring comfort and compassion to countless families. Animals often depend on others for their safety and protection. Once we were contacted by the Shelby County District Attorney’s Office, our detectives immediately investigated the allegations of possible abuse,” said Sheriff Luttrell.

While deputies are executing the search warrant, the facility will not be open to the public, and deputies will supervise limited employees inside the shelter. Animals brought to the facility during this time will be transferred to another shelter in Shelby County.

Trained investigators with ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) and emergency responders with the American Humane Association are at the shelter assisting the deputies. Catherine Desteza, an experienced animal investigator with ASPCA, and Dr. Melinda Merck, DVM, Senior Director of Veterinary Forensic Services for ASPCA, are part of the team assisting the Sheriff’s office with the investigation. Both women were involved in the dog fighting investigation that led to the 2007 indictment of NFL player Michael Vick.

Volunteers from both ASPCA and the American Humane Association will also help care for the animals while the shelter is temporarily secured and employee access is limited.

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