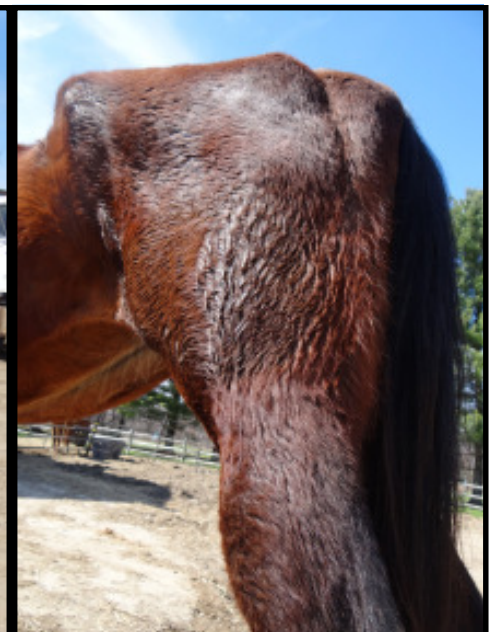


# Guilty Verdict in Columbiana County Animal Abuse Case!

In Columbiana County Municipal Court on Thursday, April 23rd, the defendant in an animal abuse trial involving 33 animals, including horses, mini-horses, alpacas, sheep, chickens, a duck, pony, goat, and dogs and cats, was found guilty of six counts of animal abuse by Judge C. Chris Amato.

## THE PLEA BARGAIN...

A plea bargain was reached between the prosecutor and the defense attorney. However, in the courtroom, Judge Amato reviewed the plea bargain and increased the severity of the penalties for the crime. The judge accepted her no-contest plea and found her guilty on all counts. The guilty verdict accompanied the following directives by Judge Amato: he increased the agreed upon two year probation and turned it into five years probation; he increased the two years not being allowed to own animals to five years not being allowed to own or care for *any* animals; he changed the original 90 days jail time with 90 days suspended, to 90 days jail time with only 80 days suspended, with the defendant having to serve ten days in jail effective Monday, April 27th; he changed the \$10 court fine per 33 animals removed to \$100 court fine per 33 animals removed; she was ordered to pay court fees; \$2,500 restitution was awarded to the



Columbiana County Humane Society; a psychiatric evaluation and follow-up treatment must be completed; and the defendant had to sign over ownership of all animals to the humane society, who in turn

*(Above) Iris, a beautiful bay mare, was emaciated when she was removed from the situation of neglect on April 22, 2014. Her withers and hip bones were painfully obvious with skin wrapped over her bones, and her muscles had completely atrophied in her hind quarters. (Right) Today, Iris has gained back approximately 175 lbs. and her hips are no longer sunken in. Her muscle structure has improved tremendously and she has made a remarkable recovery.*



signed them over to Happy Trails.

It was very rewarding to experience a judge who takes animal abuse and neglect seriously.

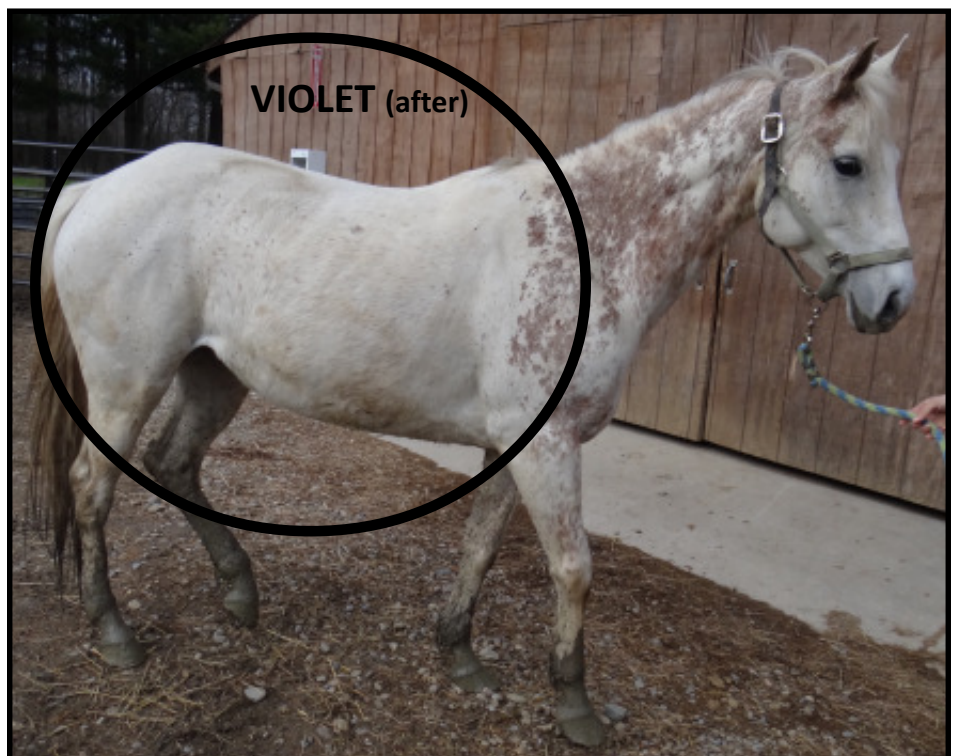
### THE REST OF THE STORY...

Last April 22nd, Happy Trails was called in to assist the Columbiana County Humane Society with the removal of a large group of neglected animals from a private residence in Lisbon, Ohio.

The dogs and cats were placed with the humane society; some of the farm animals were placed directly into foster homes; and some animals were placed at Happy Trails farm animal sanctuary. Several horses were severely underweight and suffering from malnutrition and variety of other health issues.

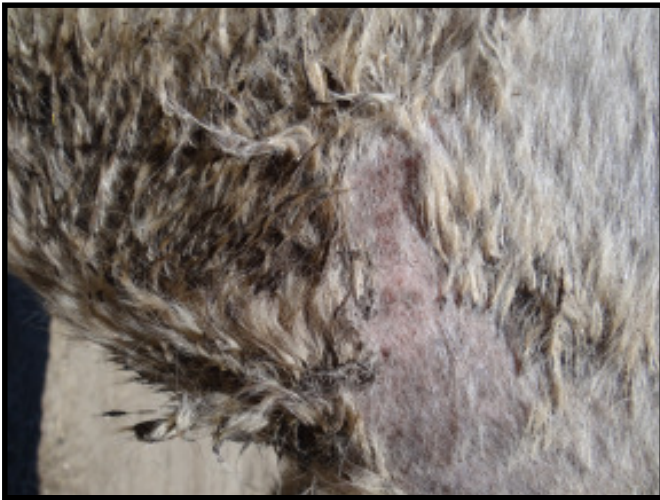
It was a long year of court proceedings and dragging things out by the defense. They demanded to have their own vet look at the horses in question nearly six months after they were removed, when the horses were then on the road to good health. That made no sense to any of us, but we guessed it might actually help the prosecution of the case. And, we were right. We produced initial photos for their vet to compare to their current conditions. Their vet determined the horses were indeed in good health six months later, and he was going to make a great witness for the prosecution. Of course he was not listed on the witness log for the defense. The inconvenience was yet another stall tactic in the court proceedings.

Pre-trials came and went and were postponed and re-scheduled multiple times over the course of



**(Top Photo)** Violet, a small flea-bitten grey mare with a red roan patch on her neck and shoulders, was underweight and had severe muscle atrophy in her hip area from malnutrition. Her ribs were visible and had pronounced atrophy near her withers and back. **(Bottom Photo)** During recovery, Violet gained about 100 lbs., the atrophy in her hips causing weak hind quarters was corrected, and her ribs were no longer apparent. The area around her withers and back filled in nicely with proper nutrition!

TYEE (before)



TYEE (after)



*(Top and Left Photos) Tye, a starving Thoroughbred gelding was caked with a mud/manure/urine mixture, and in areas this cement-like coating attached to his fur had painfully pulled off, leaving raw, pink skin underneath. He had a gaunt appearance and his hips, withers, and ribs protruded. (Right) Tye has made an amazing recovery, and gained approximately 200 lbs. which filled out his tall, athletic frame.*

the following year, while the future of the animals remained uncertain and in the care of the rescue groups responsible for them.

During this year of the frustrating waiting game, the animal care expenses were quickly adding up, especially regarding the care of the horses and other large farm animals. The animals in the care of Happy Trails and our foster homes included:

- **Violet**, an red roan/grey mare
- **Iris**, a bay mare
- **Belle**, a bay filly
- **Tyee**, a Thoroughbred gelding
- **Falcon**, a young black and white stallion (now gelded)
- **3 female alpacas** named Dump-ling, Cocoa Puff, and Petunia
- **2 hens** named Thelma and Louise
- **A duck** named Hudson
- **2 sheep** named Rosco and Valerie
- **A goat** named Captain Jack

Animal care expenses included veterinary care, medicines and medical costs; grain and hay; bedding such as straw and sawdust; radiographs and ultrasounds; hoof trimming; vaccinations; teeth floating; transportation and hauling; sheep shearing; and staff care. In February 2015, Happy Trails expenses came to \$15,388.03. By the time this last pre-trial came around, we needed to add another \$2,000 to that cost. Unfortunately, the prosecutor would not ask for restitution for Happy Trails. We are often asked why this happens. Unfortunately, we don't really understand the reason why and don't have an answer for that. That is question that we ourselves ask as well. We always present a list of our ex-

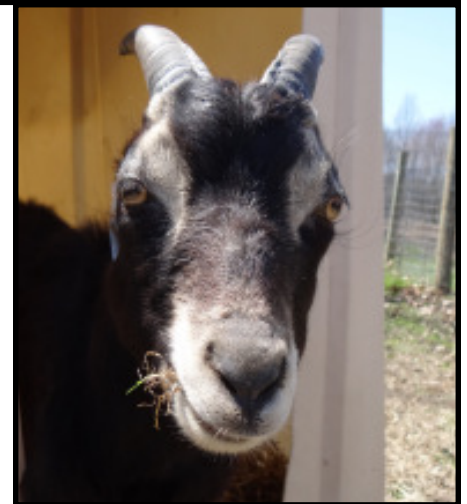
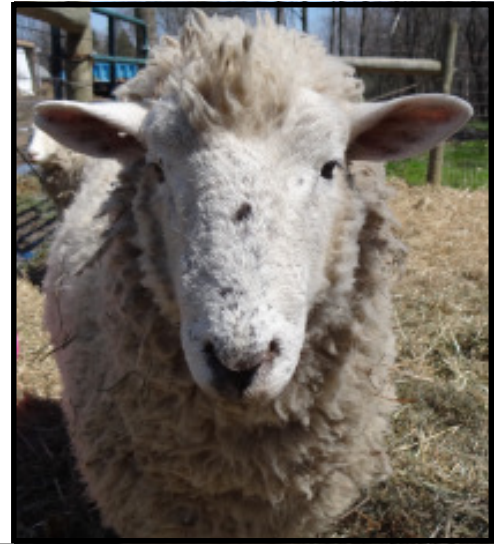
penses, but for some reason we have discovered that in many instances the county prosecutors often overlook the fact that the rescue organizations are the ones left holding the bag filled with expenses regarding the care of the animals. Why does the agency who steps up and takes responsibility for abused and neglected horses and farm animals get to carry the financial burden of the defendants who are found guilty of animal abuse?

Good question. We understand that they often have meager funds available to them. However, a monthly stipend, no matter how small, will remind them of the crime of which they were found guilty.

### THE HORSES...

At Happy Trails we named the big, beautiful, grey Thoroughbred "**Tyee**", a Native American name meaning "chief". We call him Ty for short. This big, gentle gelding had such a sad look in his eyes, and he was quiet and withdrawn. His body was emaciated, and there was a huge concern that he was not going to make it. At Happy Trails we were fortunate enough to reverse his lack of enthusiasm for life, and provided him with a recovery package that included vet and medical care, proper nutrition, tons of love and attention, and allowed him time to heal.

And not only did he heal, but he came back strong and happy. Though Ty deals with a leg issue,



**(Top to Bottom)** Roscoe and Valerie (the two sheep) and Captain Jack (the small goat) were in the group of animals removed from the situation. Under their wool coats, the veterinarian determined that you could easily feel their ribs and that the sheep and the goat were very thin. All have gained the weight appropriate for animals of their size and stature.

he is pasture-sound and will make a devoted family pet and a wonderful BFF for that horse who needs a buddy.

### THE GOODS NEWS...

There is always good news when the rescued animals are finally surrendered. This means that they are all now finally available for adoption, a year and a day after they were rescued. We can now reach out and secure loving, caring homes where they will be able to live out their lives with continued peace and healing.

When animals get adopted, this is good karma in so many ways. Not only do the current animals get to have a family to call their own, their adoption makes "room at the inn" for us to assist with other emergency rescues this year as well. If you were to adopt a rescued farm pet, or help spread the word and encourage others to adopt, you are essentially saving two lives at the same time.

**For adoption information, contact Happy Trails at 330-296-5914, and/or keep checking our website at [www.happytrailsfarm.org](http://www.happytrailsfarm.org) as we get all these animals posted as available for adoption.** April 23rd, 2015, was indeed Independence Day for them - the day they won their freedom!

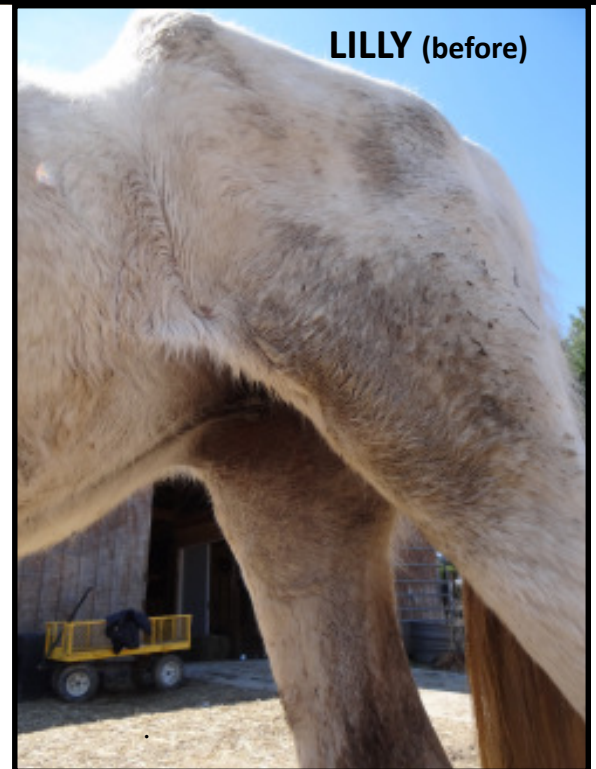
### THE BAD NEWS...

Ben was a big, gentle horse. The second I saw him standing in the cramped stall where we were removing the animals, I knew he was once an amazing and impressive draft horse. He feet were in horrible shape and every bone in his thin, frail body was painfully obvious. He was handsome, kind



LILLY (before)

and inquisitive, as most draft horses are. While we were being told he was a very "recent rescue", a big white board hanging on the barn wall with a variety of dates going back to more than a year ago told a different story. Most of the information provided to us about the horses turned out to be lies. Ben had been in this condition for quite a long time, as horses don't become emaciated overnight. The humane society placed Ben in a foster home in Columbiana County. When I learned the week following the rescue Ben went down and was unable to get back up and had to be euthanized, I was frustrated and angry. How can horse owners who neglect their horses claim to have "res-



LILLY (before)

**(Top and Bottom)** Lilly is a draft cross that had severe muscle atrophy and was suffering from malnutrition. She has made a complete recovery and doing very well. Lilly, like all the animals involved in this case, is now available for adoption to a kind, caring, forever home. For adoption information, contact Happy Trails at 330-296-5914.

cued” them and then put them in the same or even worse situations from where they were taken? His owner hadn’t really rescued him, but rather sentenced him to a life of extended neglect. It seemed so unfair. Unfair that Ben went through a great deal of misery during his life here on this earth. Locked in a stall. No bedding. No hoof care. Not enough food. Suffering from severe malnutrition, about five hundred pounds underweight. Just how incredibly sad.

The thing that struck me the most was how people connected to the defendant continued to make loud comments regarding the “good care of the animals” and how “the animals were not abused”. My suggestion would be to have them tell that to Ben. But wait — Ben’s dead.

### PEACE AND HEALING...

So while we can now plan for the future of the animals who are now available for adoption, I think it will bring a lot of peace and healing to the entire situation that we adopt them out in honor and in memory of Ben. I am sure that Ben is now in a place where this is no more pain or suffering, and that in the world of the spirit he has big green pastures and his body is as strong as ever. He gets to run and play with other horse buddies, and maybe he has even met some of the other Happy Trails horses who have crossed the Rainbow Bridge as well.

So to give respect to the big gentle giant who was not able to be saved, we would like to set our goal to make sure that each and every one of the animals involved in this case finds a home. Not one of these animals will not be

adopted or left without a family. We are going to do our very best to spread the word, and we hope that you will too. And together, let’s do this for Ben.

### SENDING THANKS TO JUDGE AMATO...

Many people often write letters or make their voices heard only when they are upset or angry about something. **Let’s make sure that our voices are heard when something positive is done on behalf of neglected animals.**

Judge Amato takes animal abuse as the serious crime that it is. In many instances animal abuse is a red flag, a precursor if you will, as to what a person is capable of. Animal abuse is so often attached to other violent crimes, and abuse, cruelty and neglect of any animal should never be tolerated. Just as there is no justifiable reason to be cruel to or to neglect a child, the same should apply to animals who also completely rely on their owners or caretakers for their food, comfort, safety and well-being.

In this case, Judge Amato considered the original plea bargain agreement and made the decision to increase the severity of several of the punishments.

As awareness increases in our court systems regarding the topic of animal abuse, we should encourage and thank the people who are doing the right thing



**(Top and Bottom)** Falcon is a recently gelded, quite handsome, black and white paint horse. He is small in stature but big in personality. This young man is doing great with ground manners and leading politely. He has come a long way, and will need an experienced handler to work with his energy and to fill his need to have a job. He wants to learn and is going to make someone a great horse. For adoption information regarding Falcon or any of the animals involved in this case, call Happy Trails at 330-296-5194.

and making a difference.

**Please write Judge Amato a polite letter or email and thank him for taking animal abuse seriously. Thank him for holding an owner responsible for the suffering they caused to helpless animals, and for being strong in his convictions that animal abuse and neglect should not be tolerated in his community.**

**You can send a polite letter of support for his decision to Judge Amato at Columbiana County Municipal Court, Attention Judge C. Chris Amato, 38832 Saltwell Road, Lisbon, Ohio 44432. You can mention you read about his strong verdict against the recent animal abuse case from Lisbon involved 16 horses and other farm animals from Happy Trails Farm Animal Sanctuary.**

If you need a few ideas on what to write, here is a sample letter you can change to make your own:

*Dear Judge Amato,  
Thank you for taking animal abuse seriously and for holding the defendant responsible for the neglected horses and other farm animals in the recent animal abuse case from Lisbon. I appreciate having strong leadership in our court system to stand up against animal abuse in our communities. Please continue to take a no-tolerance stance regarding crimes against animals.*

**Please be sure to sign your letter to give it credibility and sign it proudly, knowing that you are encouraging our court system to continue to take animal abuse seriously.** Judge Amato is a great role model for other judges who will encounter animal abuse cases. Let's give him our support

and appreciation for a job well done.

#### **IN CONCLUSION...**

**Going forward, together let's work on finding these amazing animals the homes they deserve, and let's encourage folks to donate toward their care. We are up to \$17,388 of expenses for this one case alone. Any and all donations are appreciated, as well as they are tax-deductible. Donations can be sent to Happy Trails, 5623 New Milford Road, Ravenna, Ohio 44266, or can be made on-line through our website at [www.happytrailsfarm.org](http://www.happytrailsfarm.org), or can be put on your credit card by calling Happy Trails at 330-296-5914.**

We appreciate the opportunity to work together with you to make these rescues happen, as we strive for justice for the survivors and just punishments for the owners. **Let's bring this rescue to a close with good homes for all the animals from this case. Together, we will make Ben proud.**



*Belle was taken to OSU (Ohio State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital) for a special examination. She has a hernia on her side that prevents her from being turned out in pastures with aggressive horses or other animals that might kick or otherwise injure her. She is a sweet, lovely little mare who will make a great pasture mate for a calm, quiet horse who simply needs a friend. She is great to work with and has excellent ground manners.*

### **For Adoption Information**

and photos of all the animals involved in this case, please contact Happy Trails at 330-296-5914 or email us at [info@happytrailsfarm.org](mailto:info@happytrailsfarm.org)

**Mini Horses • Sheep  
Goat • Horses  
Hens • Duck • Alpacas  
Available for Adoption**