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Fidel Lopez pleads guilty, receives maximum sentence for sexually assaulting a dog

Today, Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill announced that 52-year-old Fidel Lopez pleaded guilty to one count of aggravated animal abuse in the first degree and one count of sexually assaulting an animal.

By pleading guilty, Fidel Lopez admitted that he unlawfully and intentionally tortured "Estrella," a Lhasa Apso mix, and that for the purpose of arousing his sexual desires, he sexually assaulted Estrella.

Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge Angel Lopez accepted the change of plea and sentenced Fidel Lopez to 60 days in jail and 36 months of probation on each count. The sentences will run concurrently. In addition, Fidel Lopez may not possess a dog for 15 years.

As part of his probation, the court ordered that Fidel Lopez not have any contact with Estrella's owner without prior permission from the probation department; undergo an assessment and complete any treatment for adults who abuse animals and undergo separate evaluations for drug and alcohol and domestic violence and complete treatment if ordered; and pay \$500 in restitution. Additionally, Judge Lopez ordered that while on probation, Fidel Lopez may not own or care for any type of animal.

"This case was prosecuted to the fullest extent possible under Oregon law," said Multnomah County Deputy District Attorney Nicole Jergovic, who is responsible for litigating nearly all of the animal neglect and abuse cases in Multnomah County. "The torture and abuse that Estrella suffered is unimaginable. Under Oregon's current sentencing guidelines, Fidel Lopez is receiving the maximum sentence based on the amount of time he has already served in custody and his lack of criminal history."

Estrella's owner, who was known to Fidel Lopez, was updated regularly throughout the plea negotiation process and is in support of resolving the case pretrial.

Judge Lopez said the only reason he imposed the sentence he did was because it was the "maximum" allowed by law.

"If it could have been more, I would have gladly given you more," Judge Lopez said in court.

This investigation started on November 18, 2018 when law enforcement learned Estrella had been medically evaluated at DoveLewis Emergency Animal Hospital after her owner expressed concerns that Estrella had been sexually abused.

The veterinarians performed an animal sexual assault forensic evaluation, which confirmed that Estrella had been sexually assaulted.

Due to the extensive internal injuries, Estrella was euthanized.

Fidel Lopez was quickly identified as the suspect in this case. During the investigation, he admitted to sexually abusing the dog. Forensic evidence gathered in this case confirmed that Lopez was in fact the person who sexually abused Estrella.

DDA Jergovic, a veteran prosecutor, has received specialized training in prosecuting animal abuse and neglect cases, and has received the Oregon Humane Society's highest award for individuals who have helped fight for better animal rights. She has also been recognized nationally for being an animal advocate.

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