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For Immediate Release

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# Poway Couple that Hoarded 140 Dogs Arrested on Animal Abuse Charges

## *Yorkshire Terriers in Poor Health, Kept in Dark, Feces-Filled Room*

The [San Diego County District Attorney's Office](#) today announced that an elderly couple who hoarded 92 Yorkshire Terrier and Yorkie-mix dogs in a feces-filled home in Poway, and 48 additional dogs at a second location, have been arrested on multiple counts of animal abuse. Christine Calvert, 62, and Mark Vattimo, 73, have each been arrested on 10 felony counts of animal abuse and neglect, as well as one misdemeanor count of resisting an officer.

“The shocking conditions and sheer number of animals in the defendants’ home make this a particularly disturbing case of animal abuse,” said District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis.

Vattimo was arrested on February 25 and released on \$50,000 bail. He is scheduled to be arraigned in San Diego Superior Court on March 6. Calvert, who fled San Diego in a motorhome purchased for her by Vattimo, was taken into custody on February 24 in Primm, Nevada. At a hearing today in Clark County, Nevada Calvert waived extradition and will be returned to San Diego to face charges. The additional dogs that were in Calvert’s possession were transported to San Diego yesterday by the San Diego Humane Society.

Humane Society investigators were tipped off by a complaint from a local veterinary clinic. When investigators entered the couple’s home, they found dozens of dogs had been kept in a dark room upstairs. The majority of the dogs had severe matting, feces entangled in their coats, skin issues, ear infections, fleas, hair loss, overgrown nails and poor teeth. One dog was missing part of its leg. The room was covered with debris and mice scattered across the floor.

“Hoarding is a mental illness and we have compassion for individuals who suffer from the disease. When they reach out to us for help and are cooperative, our priority is to get the animals to safety and get the individuals the help they need,” said Stephen MacKinnon, chief of humane law enforcement for San Diego Humane Society. “In this instance, when we discovered the owners were withholding animals and interfering with an active investigation, it became intentional animal cruelty so criminal charges needed to be pursued. We’re grateful for the support of the District Attorney’s office and to be in a community that doesn’t tolerate animal cruelty or neglect.”

The dogs were taken to the San Diego Humane Society's San Diego campus where veterinarians and animal care teams examined and treated them. After being flooded with adoption requests, San Diego Humane Society introduced a special online adoption application. In less than 24 hours, the agency stopped accepting applications. More than 1,800 people had submitted applications to adopt less than 90 dogs. SDHS used a lottery system to select people to meet the Yorkies.

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*For more information regarding the rescued dogs, or to schedule an interview with the Human Society or obtain B-roll, please contact (619) 279-5086 or Elizabeth Pecsí at (619) 277-9600 or [epecsi@sdhumane.org](mailto:epecsi@sdhumane.org)*

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- *B-ROLL AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST*

*INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES*

- *Steve MacKinnon, Chief of Humane Law Enforcement*

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