



October 29, 2020

The Honorable Jeannine Pacioni
Monterey County District Attorney

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Pacioni,

I hope this letter finds you well. I'm writing to request that your office add appropriate cruelty-to-animals charges against Ivan Geronimo Gomez, who is scheduled for a preliminary hearing today on the charges—including arson of forestland—that he already faces in connection with the Dolan fire near Big Sur. The suffering endured by animals in this fire must not be ignored.

While it is well known that firefighters have incurred serious injuries while battling this fire and that it has destroyed at least 14 homes and nearly 125,000 acres of forest, catastrophic fires also cause many wild animals to endure terror, suffering, and prolonged, agonizing deaths. For example, the Dolan fire leveled an 80-acre condor sanctuary, killing nine of the critically endangered birds.

Cal. Penal Code § 597(b) states that any person who "tortures, torments, ... or cruelly kills any animal, or causes ... any animal to be so ... tortured, tormented, ... or cruelly killed" is guilty of cruelty to animals.¹ Cal. Penal Code § 599b states that "'torment,' 'torture,' and 'cruelty' include every act ... whereby unnecessary or unjustifiable physical pain or suffering is caused or permitted."² Because Gomez is accused of starting a wildfire that has led to unnecessary and unjustifiable pain, suffering, and death for at least nine animals, I respectfully ask that investigators and your office add cruelty charges to those he already faces, in the same way that an [Oregon prosecutor recently did regarding a defendant in a similar case](#).

Thank you for your consideration and for the difficult work that you do.

Sincerely,

Sarah Deffinger
Evidence Analyst
Cruelty Investigations Department

¹Cal. Penal Code § 597(b)
<https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=PEN§ionNum=597> (last accessed on Oct. 29, 2020).

²Cal. Penal Code § 599b
<https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=PEN§ionNum=599b> (last accessed on Oct. 29, 2020).

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