



PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

November 9, 2020

The Honorable Stephanie A. Bridgett  
Shasta County District Attorney

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Bridgett:

I hope this letter finds you well. I'm writing to request that your office add cruelty-to-animals charges, if warranted, against Caleb Michael Eckert, who is scheduled for a November 10 plea disposition conference on the charges, including for assault, that he faces in connection with a vehicle fire outside Anderson that reportedly sparked the Dersch fire. CAL FIRE officers are evidently recommending arson-related charges against Eckert. The suffering endured by animals in this fire must not be ignored.

While no humans lost their lives, the enormous number of wild animals who resided in the 133 acres of vegetation burned in the fire were undoubtedly less fortunate. Such catastrophic fires cause countless wild animals to endure terror, suffering, and a prolonged, agonizing death.

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.<sup>1</sup> 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."<sup>2</sup> Because Eckert is accused of starting a wildfire that surely led to unnecessary and unjustifiable pain, suffering, and death for an untold number of animals, I respectfully ask that investigators and your office consider adding 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

<sup>1</sup>Cal. Penal Code § 597(b)

<[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=PEN&sectionNum=597](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=PEN&sectionNum=597)> (last accessed on Nov. 9, 2020).

<sup>2</sup>Cal. Penal Code § 599b

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