

PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

June 2, 2022

The Honorable William Culver  
16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Attorney

Dear Mr. Culver:

I hope this letter finds you well. I'm writing to request that your office add cruelty-to-animals charges, as appropriate, to the arson, reckless endangerment, and related charges that Charles Gregory Champney already faces in connection with the devastating Fort Lyon River fire in Las Animas. The suffering endured by animals in this blaze must not be ignored.

Although it's well known that the fire destroyed two homes and nearly 3,000 acres of land—and forced the entire town of Fort Lyon to evacuate—catastrophic fires also inflict terror and suffering on many domesticated and wild animals and cause them to endure prolonged, agonizing deaths. For example, the Fort Lyon River fire is known to have killed five pigs and numerous chickens.

[CRS § 18-9-202](#) states that cruelty to animals is committed if a person “recklessly, or with criminal negligence ... mistreats ... any animal ... or needlessly kills an animal.” [CRS § 18-9-201](#) defines “mistreatment” as “every act ... that causes or unreasonably permits the continuation of unnecessary or unjustifiable pain or suffering.” Given that Champney is accused of recklessly causing a wildfire that led to unnecessary and unjustifiable pain, suffering, and death for at least seven animals, I respectfully ask that investigators and your office add cruelty charges to those he already faces, in the same way prosecutors in [California](#) and [Oregon](#) did regarding defendants in similar cases—both of which resulted in convictions on those charges.

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

Sincerely,



Sarah Deffinger  
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Cruelty Investigations Department

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