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ANIMAL CRUELTY CHARGES FILED AGAINST LATON MAN FOLLOWING DISCOVERY OF HUNDREDS OF DECEASED AND NEGLECTED ANIMALS

The Fresno County District Attorney's Office has filed felony charges against Carl Joseph Mendes (42, of Laton) for animal cruelty following a disturbing discovery of widespread animal neglect and death on his property.

On May 3, 2024, officers from the Fresno County Sheriff's Office, Central California SPCA, and Fresno Humane Animal Services responded to reports of multiple neglected and deceased animals at Mendes' residence. Upon arrival, officers observed extensive animal neglect across the property.

Pigs were found confined in pens alongside decomposing carcasses, with some animals so severely deteriorated they were in skeletal form. One emaciated piglet was in such poor condition that it had to be euthanized on-site.

Six newborn goats, or "kids," with umbilical cords still attached, were discovered in a trailer—lethargic, underweight, and without access to milk or water. At this stage of life, such animals require feeding every four to six hours. One baby goat was found dead in a cage by itself; another was later euthanized due to its condition.

Approximately 150 chickens, roosters, and pigeons were located in filthy pens contaminated with feces, lacking clean water, and housing both living and dead birds. Testing later confirmed that many of the birds were infected with serious, highly contagious diseases. Numerous fowl died or were euthanized during the investigation.

Fresno County Public Health was called in to assist with cleanup and estimated between 400–500 deceased animals were on the property, including grave sites where multiple animal remains were dumped into mass burial pits.

In addition to the animal cruelty, children living on the property were found to be exposed to the same hazardous and unsanitary conditions—prompting the filing of child endangerment charges.

The Felony Complaint filed in Fresno County Superior Court charges Mendes with six counts:

- Three (3) counts of CRUELTY TO AN ANIMAL [Penal Code §597(b)];
- Three (3) counts of CHILD ENDANGERMENT [Penal Code §273a(b)].

If convicted on all charges, Mendes faces a maximum sentence of four years and four months in local prison.

Arraignment is scheduled for May 27, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. in Department 30 of the Fresno County Superior Court.

"The inhumane treatment of these animals—combined with the reckless exposure of children to disease, filth, and death—is both heartbreaking and criminal," said Fresno County District Attorney Lisa Smittcamp. *"We are committed to ensuring the safety of our community's most vulnerable, whether they are children or animals who cannot protect themselves."*

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