

# Man charged with animal cruelty for alleged shock collar abuse

By EMILY RUSSO MILLER, Juneau Empire, October 12, 2012

## JUNEAU EMPIRE

A Juneau man has been charged with animal cruelty for allegedly injuring his Beagle by the continued and improper use of an electric shock collar.

Robert R. Petersen, 54, pleaded not guilty to the misdemeanor in Juneau District Court on Wednesday, and he is slated to go to trial in December.

Prosecutors say the dog, named Ares, sustained multiple wounds on its neck from the RC-8 Radio Collar from continuous wear from Jan. 1, 2011, to July 19, 2012, according to charging documents.

An affidavit filed by Assistant City Attorney Robyn Carlisle states the RC-8 Radio Collar is intended to keep dogs in an outdoor space, but Petersen told an Animal Control officer that the electronic fence is set up inside his home to keep Ares out of certain areas.

Petersen denied any wrongdoing to Animal Control, as the affidavit states Petersen said he did not see any signs of blood or injuries on the dog.

That's contradictory to a report submitted by the clinic director for Gastineau Humane Society, Dr. Rachel Bergart, who examined the dog on July 21 and cleaned its wounds while it was sedated.

Her report indicated she observed two open "active" wounds on its neck from the prongs of the shock collar, as well as at least eight other distinct wounds around its neck in various stages of healing, according to the affidavit.

The underside of the dog's neck was shaved, but the fur had dried blood and fluid scabs embedded in it, said Animal Control Officer Ben Peyer, who was present during the exam, according to the affidavit.

Peyer said the two open wounds were red and swollen, and the worst wound was swollen approximately one and a half inches around and about half an inch high, the affidavit states. A hole the size of the shock collar probe in the center was about .375 inches deep, the affidavit states.

The prongs of the black and silver collar were approximately half an inch long, the affidavit states.

Peyer said he removed the shock collar, which was in the "on" position, and found hair, dried body fluid, hair matted with scabs, blood and pus on the inside of the collar near the probes, the affidavit states.

"The probes that are brass were covered with the build-up of dried body fluid and were mostly black colored instead of brass colored," the affidavit says.

Bergart said the dog was "repeatedly, knowingly injured by continued improper use of the electronic shock collar" over "some period of time" based on the stages of the wounds, the affidavit states.

Peyer interviewed Petersen, who said Ares has worn the collar at all times, except when the battery is changed, for the past two and a half years, according to the affidavit.

Petersen adopted the dog in May of 2008 with his wife, and he continued to care for it after they divorced two years ago and she moved out of state, the affidavit says.

A phone message left on Petersen's home answering machine seeking comment was not returned by press time. His attorney, John Leque, declined to comment on the case, saying, "Any statements that are made will be made in court."

Carlisle also declined to comment earlier this week due to the ongoing litigation. Phone calls to the city attorney John Hartle went unreturned both Wednesday and Friday.

The case against Petersen began when the dog was dropped off by a third-party at the humane society after-hours the evening of July 19. The affidavit states a veterinarian technician found it in the front entryway the next morning.

It was wearing a shock collar, flea collar and a harness, but no tags. Animal Control officers used a microchip that was in the dog to identify Petersen as the owner, the affidavit states.

Pictures of the dog were not available to the press, said Chava Lee, the executive director of GHS for the past 11 years, due to the ongoing nature of the case.

Lee declined to talk specifically at this case, but did say in general that shock collar abuse is not something the humane society sees often.

"They're few and far between," Lee said in a phone interview, adding, "I believe this is the only one I've see during the time that I've been here."

Petersen has released Ares to the shelter, and the beagle has already been placed with a new family at a new home, Lee said.

Animal cruelty is a class 'B' misdemeanor under city ordinances, which means it is punishable by up to 90 days in prison, a \$2,000 fine, or both.

High Tech Pet Products Inc, the Ventura, Calif.-based company that makes the RC-8 collar, could not be reached for comment.

- Contact reporter Emily Russo Miller at 523-2263 or at [emily.miller@juneauempire.com](mailto:emily.miller@juneauempire.com)