

Sheriff: Ramsey Co. Deputy Caught On Camera Abusing K-9

CBS Minnesota, June 26, 2015

MINNEAPOLIS (WCCO) — A Ramsey County Sheriff's deputy faces criminal charges after he was caught on surveillance cameras abusing his K-9 partner at a Carlton casino.

The Carlton County Sheriff's Office says 48-year-old Brett Arthur Berry was at Black Bear Casino on June 14 for a canine training and certification event.

Deputies were called to the casino just before 3 a.m. on June 15 on a report of animal cruelty caught on camera involving Berry, who had been asked to leave the casino's Cobalt Lounge earlier in the night by deputies due to staff complaints.

Berry was observed on camera leaving the lounge, going back to his hotel room and then leaving with his K-9 partner five minutes later. He was then observed carrying the dog to his car while being visibly upset.

The accused was next seen on camera picking up the dog by the collar and throwing it to the ground. The K-9 then ran back to the casino and got trapped between entryway doors. Berry was seen catching up to his partner, and then repeatedly hitting the K-9.

The Ramsey County Sheriff's Office released a written statement Friday, saying they are "troubled" by the allegations.

"Deputy Berry was sent home from the K-9 trials and placed on administrative leave," the sheriff's office said. "The K-9 was evaluated by a veterinarian and no injuries were found. The K-9 partner is currently in the care of others."

Berry was arrested and has been charged with two misdemeanor counts: one for assaulting a public safety dog and one for animal cruelty.

He is an 18-year veteran of the department and has received letters of recognition in the past. One complaint has been filed against Berry in his career, involving "poor public relations" during a traffic stop.

UPDATE

Ramsey County reluctantly accepts return of deputy who beat dog

by Sarah Horner, Pioneer Press, November 1, 2016

The Ramsey County canine beaten by his handler during an alcohol-fueled incident at a casino last summer returned to duty a few months later.

The deputy charged with attacking him will return to work this week after an arbitrator overruled the sheriff's office's attempt to fire him for the conduct.

Brett Arthur Berry and his police dog partner. (2014 image via Ramsey County sheriff's office)
It's not the outcome the sheriff's office wanted for Deputy Brett Arthur Berry, according to Ramsey County Chief Deputy Jack Serier, who spoke at a press conference about the development Tuesday.

"These kind of incidents tarnish the badge," Serier said of the Berry's behavior and the impact it's had on the department. "It's very much a difficult situation."

Berry will now serve in the sheriff's office's detention unit. He will have no interaction with law enforcement canines.

The canine he was found guilty of mistreating, Boone, is now in "excellent health" and is working alongside Deputy Spencer Peham, Serier added.

He added that he suspects the 7-year-old German shepherd has years of service left in him.

"I have known for many years that Boone is the best canine dog that we have... He is just such a high performing dog," Serier said.

Berry was fired April 8, a few months after a Carlton County, Minn., judge sentenced him to a year of probation for the June 2015 incident at Black Bear Casino. Berry admitted that he got drunk while at the casino for a canine officers' certification event and beat his K-9 partner, Boone, out of frustration when he had a hard time putting the dog back on a leash.

The incident was captured on security video and generated considerable anger from the public and embarrassment to the sheriff's office.

Serier said Tuesday that his office would have moved to fire Berry after conducting its own "fair and impartial investigation" regardless of the public's reaction.

"There are times when someone does something so egregious that you have no choice but to take very harsh discipline," Serier said.

State arbitrator Gil Vernon disagreed with that course of action

In a decision filed Monday, Vernon wrote that the sheriff's office did not sufficiently consider mitigating factors in reaching its decision, including Berry's low risk for future misconduct. He also noted that Berry had taken responsibility for his actions, had a nearly 20-year incident-free employment record, and had sought alcohol abuse treatment.

Serier acknowledged Berry's previously "good record" with the sheriff's office Tuesday and said he believed he was "capable" of continuing that track record in the future.

"The arbitrator in his case has ruled and (now) it is our responsibility to ensure that Deputy Berry serves the citizens of Ramsey County with honor, truth, respect and responsibility," he said.

Berry could not be reached for comment. He had worked with Boone for about three years before the incident took place.

Two residents wrote messages in chalk outside the sheriff's office Tuesday expressing their frustration with Berry's return to employment.

One message read, "not fit to serve." Another said "Justice 4 K9 Boone."