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Irresponsible Pet Owner Sentenced to Prison

OSCEOLA COUNTY, Fla. – An Osceola County jury found a St. Cloud man, David Rhum, 35, guilty of Aggravated Animal Cruelty after he failed to seek proper medical care for a dog in his care for severe injuries it received that led to its death.

On October 28, 2022, Osceola County sheriff's deputies and Osceola County Animal Services officers responded to 9405 Concord Street for a severely injured dog. Deputies were directed to a shed in the rear of the property where they found Junior, a Pitbull terrier, lying on his side and not moving. Junior had several injuries on his body and head and whimpered when deputies tried to move him. Officers used a blanket as a stretcher to remove the dog from the shed.

A veterinarian found deep puncture wounds to Junior's legs and head. The vet also found lacerations in the dog's ears with some going through the cartilage and large amounts of pus oozing from the open wounds. The vet determined Junior was most likely in shock due to an infection. He suffered a seizure and lost consciousness. Junior died shortly after the decision was made to euthanize him.

Officers contacted Junior's owner, David Rhum, 35, who said Junior had escaped his property, entered a neighboring fenced property and was severely attacked by two other dogs. Rhum also told officers two weeks before the attack Junior was bitten by a water moccasin. A week before that, Rhum said Junior was attacked by another neighbor's dogs. Rhum did not properly seek veterinarian care after any of the incidents. He told officers he only called a vet a day after the snake bite and he called around to additional vets after the latest attack. Ultimately, Rhum failed to act by not taking Junior to get the proper medical attention for his injuries. That failure to act resulted in the unnecessary pain and suffering and a cruel death of the dog.

After a two-day trial, a jury found Rhum guilty of Aggravated Animal Cruelty. The judge sentenced him to 18 months in the Florida Department of Corrections followed by 24 months of supervised probation and community control where he will not be allowed to own any animals during that time.

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