

Calgary-area sheep owner says teen attacker's sentence too lenient

Youth must pay fine, serve community

BY GWENDOLYN RICHARDS, CALGARY HERALD OCTOBER 22, 2009

A sentence of probation and community service for a Strathmore teen who attacked a sheep-- injuring it to the point it had to be put down--doesn't fit the crime, says the animal's owner.

Photograph by: THE GAZETTE/MARIE-FRANCE COALLIER,

CALGARY - A sentence of probation and community service for a Strathmore teen who attacked a sheep-- injuring it to the point it had to be put down--doesn't fit the crime, says the animal's owner.

The youth, who cannot be named under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, was ordered to perform 50 months of community service and pay restitution of \$607 to owner Mel Smart.

Smart, who has been to all of the teen's court appearances since the June 2008 incident, said she expected nothing more from the sentence considering the limitations of youth court guidelines, but is still disappointed.

"I certainly don't think beating-- resulting in the death of an animal--versus probation is any way, shape or form equal," she said Wednesday. "I always hope that some sort of justice is going to prevail. But, unfortunately, the way the youth court system works in Canada, that's not going to happen."

Smart had loaned her herd of about 300 sheep to the Strathmore Agricultural Society to help maintain its grounds last summer.

The animals were behind a two-metre high, chain link fence when four teens entered the area and harassed the animals. The youth used a hockey stick to beat the sheep.

Smart said one ewe had to be put down due to extensive injuries, and more than a dozen others were injured.

Four teens were charged with trespassing and one faced the second charge of injuring cattle.

He pleaded guilty to the second charge in Strathmore provincial court. The trespassing charge was withdrawn.

According to Smart, the judge blasted the teen, who was under probation at the time of the incident, and adjourned court to allow the youth and his family to make arrangements to get the money for restitution so it could be paid that day.

Animal activist Heather Anderson said she was surprised the teen pleaded guilty and saddened the sentence did not reflect the brutality of the crime.

"Every bone was shattered," she said. "She had to lay there until she was found."

Anderson, who created the DAISY foundation, said cases like these indicate there is a need for tougher penalties for animal cruelty.

"There's no difference between animal abuse and people abuse and it has to stop," she said.

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