

Jackie Lacey

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NEWS RELEASE

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Couple Pleads to Abuse of More Than a Dozen Dogs

Two dog trainers have pleaded no contest for abusing 26 dogs under their care, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Junior Barillas Morales, 28, and Natasha Elena Ahmad, 25, both entered the plea yesterday to one felony count of animal cruelty.

Additionally, Morales pleaded to two additional felony counts of animal cruelty, one felony count of child abuse and one misdemeanor count of animal cruelty.

Deputy District Attorney Amarilla Blondia said defendant Morales was immediately sentenced to five years in state prison.

Ahmad was sentenced to six months in jail, five years of formal probation, 45 days community labor, animal neglect classes and additional conditions imposed by the court including a prohibition on owning or possessing any animals for 10 years.

The defendants also agreed to make a \$10,000 payment toward an undetermined amount of restitution.

According to testimony at the preliminary hearing, the defendants operated a dog training business called Real Deal K-9's. Customers of the business allege they paid thousands of dollars and received very sick, thin dogs.

On Feb. 7, 2017, three very thin dogs were discovered by neighbors, according to evidence presented at the preliminary hearing. A subsequent investigation uncovered two deceased dogs and eight additional dogs in the defendant's property. One of the live dogs had to have a leg amputated due to an untreated infection, the prosecutor said.

On May 2, 2017, investigators searching the defendant's home allegedly found a loaded gun in a sofa where the couple's three children, ages 1, 4, and 7, could find it, the prosecutor added. The home was extremely dirty and a total of 24 dogs were seized during that search, according to court testimony.

Case MA071159 was investigated by the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation and the County of Los Angeles Department of Animal Care and Control.

[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.