



OFFICE OF THE VANDERBURGH COUNTY PROSECUTOR

DIANA L. MOERS

ADMINISTRATION BLDG. - ROOM 108
1 NW MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BLVD
EVANSVILLE, IN 47708
(812) 435-5150 | prosecutorinfo@vanderburghgov.org

*****MEDIA ALERT*****

For Immediate Release
June 9, 2026

CONTACT: Adam Kight
Phone: 812-435-5734

PROLIFIC ANIMAL ABUSER SHAYNA BURKO GETS MORE PRISON TIME

VANDERBURGH COUNTY, Ind. — Prosecutor Diana Moers announces that on Tuesday, June 9, the Honorable Magistrate Judge Ryan C. Reed of the Vanderburgh Circuit Court revoked the probation of Shayna Faye Burko and ordered her to serve time in prison for her crimes against animals.

The decision was made during a hearing on Tuesday, where Burko appeared for a case in which she was charged and convicted of seven Level 6 Felony counts of cruelty to animals.

Burko was previously sentenced to serve two years of probation in this case, but Tuesday's hearing to revoke her probation came about after she recently pled guilty to several counts of animal cruelty in a separate case Warrick County, Indiana. In her recent case in Warrick County, Burko was also sentenced to serve 4 years in prison.

During Tuesday's hearing, Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Keaton Maurer argued that the conditions of Burko's probation included possessing no animals, aside from a service animal if applicable. DPA Maurer pointed out Burko's blatant disregard for that condition and her pattern of animal abuse, listing the numerous animals that suffered at Burko's hands in the Warrick County case.

After hearing the State's arguments, Judge Reed revoked Burko's prior sentence of 2 years' probation and instead ordered her to serve 2 years at the Indiana Department of Correction. At the time of Burko's original sentencing in 2023, the State requested she receive the maximum executed sentence of 4 years in prison.

Burko was arrested in 2022 after leaving several dogs in a home on Mooring Road to suffer and die. The rooms of the home were filled with urine and feces. In addition to a deceased German Shepard, officers found a detached dog head and limb inside the home. Of the dogs that survived the horrific abuse, several were malnourished.

Burko's case is one of several that motivated Prosecutor Moers to fight for stricter punishments for animal abusers and stronger protections for animals in our state. Prosecutor Moers collaborated with Representative Wendy McNamara on House Bill 1165, which was recently signed into law by Gov. Mike Braun. During her time in

Indianapolis testifying in support of the bill, Prosecutor Moers pointed to several animal cruelty cases that justified the new protective measures, including Burko's.

Following Tuesday's hearing, Prosecutor Moers said: "It is a well-studied fact that animal abusers and hoarders are often repeat offenders and pose a serious threat to our society by their propensity to commit violent and other crimes. This is why I worked with Rep. Wendy McNamara to change the law in Indiana and increase the penalties for animal neglect and hoarding situations, so we don't have to wait for defendants to hoard, harm and neglect animals repeatedly before they see the inside of a prison. I am glad to see this prolific animal abuser and hoarder finally get the prison time she deserves—which was the maximum amount allowable under the law—and that she will no longer have access to animals.

Animal cases are difficult to prosecute because the victims cannot speak. I commend our animal rescue community who has shown up for these animals and remained a voice and advocate to the defenseless. I also thank our law enforcement at animal control and the Evansville Police Department Humane Unit and especially the Prosecution Team in Warrick County including Prosecutor Mike Perry and John Schaefer who fought hard to make sure Shana Burko received a four-year sentence before being re-sentenced on her case in Vanderburgh County.

These cases require careful investigation, time, and expertise to successfully prosecute. I encourage Vanderburgh County residents to remain vigilant and if they suspect animal abuse or neglect—please call 911. Our Evansville Police and Sheriff Departments as well as animal control are trained to identify animal abuse and neglect and also to identify those who might need resources to properly take care of their animals. If animals are being abused and neglected, other vulnerable people are also at risk such as children, the sick, and the elderly.

If you find yourself unable to care for animals you have, please reach out for help! Abandoning and neglecting animals is not only cruel but carries with it criminal penalties which can be avoided."