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Plea deal resolves case of dog abuse

By **Ryan Slight**
News-Leader staff

A dog who was battered in the skull and shot in the head with a nail gun should soon have a new home and, for 15 days, so will the man who shot him.

Numerous area residents have applied to adopt Trucker from the Castaway Animal Rescue Effort shelter in Springfield.

A recent posting on the nonprofit organization's Web site indicated no more applications will be taken after several quality ones were received.

John M. Haynes, 41, of Humansville pleaded guilty Wednesday to a class A misdemeanor charge of animal abuse for harming the hound-heeler mix, who is about 1 year old.

Associate Polk County Circuit Judge Gary Lynch sentenced Haynes to 15



Trucker, shown with C.A.R.E.'s Melissa Sartin, is healing but was left blind in one eye.

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days in the Polk County Jail after suspending execution of a six-month jail term. Haynes' incarceration will begin on June 13.

The Humansville man also received two years of unsupervised probation, and was ordered to pay nearly \$650 in court fines.

Bolivar attorney Kenneth Ashlock, who represented Haynes, said his client was asked to kill Trucker because the dog had attacked people. Haynes could not be reached for comment.

"That's what he had available to use," Ashlock said of the nail gun. He added that Haynes had decent intentions, but may have used an improper method.

"It wasn't to see if he could hurt the dog or make it suffer," Ashlock said.

Polk County Prosecutor John Porter said he was "very pleased" with the plea agreement reached with Haynes. He felt the sentence would help deter others from abusing animals.

Ashlock said he had no comment on the sentence except to note that attorneys agreed on it.

A probable-cause statement filed last month alleged Trucker had killed puppies in addition to attacking two people.

Caregivers and volunteers with C.A.R.E. have cared for Trucker since his beating, and claim they saw no viciousness from the animal.

Melissa Sartin, shelter director, was not available for comment Thursday, a



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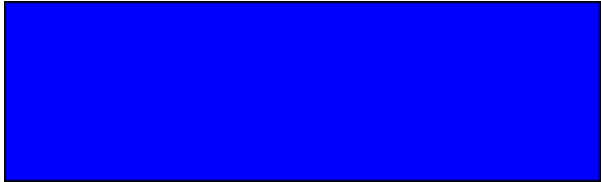
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caretaker said at the group's Springfield site.

Some of the animal's supporters questioned why Haynes did not face a felony charge in the abuse, but Porter said he could not prove the action was for punishment or sadistic pleasure.

The dog suffered one blind eye, scars and hearing problems that may be permanent, caretakers have said.

However, C.A.R.E.'s Web site said the dog's health has improved, and scars where nails were shot in his head have healed.



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