Burnley Man Banned from Keeping Animals After Shocking Wildlife Abuse Investigation

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A Burnley man has been banned from keeping animals for five years after being convicted of multiple animal welfare and wildlife offences, following an investigation initiated by Naturewatch Foundation's wildlife crime investigators.

The investigation began when the animal-welfare charity submitted a wildlife crime intelligence package to the Lancashire Police Rural Task Force in May 2024. Acting on the evidence, officers secured and executed a warrant alongside the RSPCA's Special Operations Unit and a veterinary surgeon.

The subsequent investigation and prosecution by the RSPCA resulted in the offender pleading guilty to four offences - including two under animal welfare legislation and two relating to crimes against badgers.

The court imposed a five-year ban on keeping all animals. In addition, the offender received a 12-month community order, was ordered to complete 15 rehabilitation activity days, and must pay £600 in costs, an £80 fine, and a £32 victim surcharge.

Evidence presented to the court revealed the man had encouraged and allowed two dogs to engage in violent confrontations with wildlife, including foxes, hares, badgers and deer. Footage reviewed during the investigation showed the dogs repeatedly being used in hunting situations where they attacked wild animals without intervention.

The RSPCA investigating officer described the footage as "clear evidence" that the dogs had been used persistently in such activities, resulting in injuries consistent with repeated confrontations with wildlife.

Chief Inspector in the RSPCA's Special Operations Unit, Will Mitchell, said: *"The impact on both wildlife and dogs in this case is extremely upsetting. All animals deserve to be treated with kindness and compassion and this result should act as a warning that such behaviour will not be tolerated."*

Veterinary evidence confirmed that one of the dogs had sustained severe injuries, including deep lacerations exposing underlying tendons. The vet concluded the dogs had routinely been placed in situations that exposed them to serious harm, with no adequate attempts made to control or protect them.

Further video evidence examined during the investigation revealed injuries linked to hunting activity and indications of involvement in illegal badger baiting. Both dogs were seized by police in December 2024.

Jim Clark, Campaign Manager at Naturewatch Foundation said:

"This case highlights the vital importance of continued vigilance and the reporting of suspected animal abuse. Naturewatch Foundation's animal abuse investigation team is working to tackle these issues through initiatives such as Operation Major, and we encourage the public to learn more about this work. It also underscores the critical role of collaboration between organisations in bringing perpetrators to justice and advancing animal welfare."

For more information about Operation Major, click here.

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