

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 17, 2014

Opossum Beating Death Spurred Animal Cruelty Charge
spcaLA Animal Cruelty Investigations

Los Angeles, CA – On June 5, 2012 at approximately 11pm, Jose Chavez, age 67, beat a female opossum to death outside his apartment in the 1000 block of West 23rd Street in Los Angeles, prompting an animal cruelty investigation by Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Los Angeles (spcaLA) Humane Officers. As a result of the spcaLA investigation, Chavez was charged with misdemeanor animal cruelty.

Chavez took a wooden stick to a fence outside his apartment building, where a momma opossum and her babies lay. Chavez then struck the momma in the head, knocking her from the fence. She attempted escape, and Chavez took the bleeding momma with babies attached to her to an open area where he repeated beat and eventually killed her. Then, Chavez placed the dead momma and her live babies in a plastic bag and put the cruel package in a nearby dumpster.

The momma opossum was found to have died due to repeated blows to the right side of her head, causing massive hemorrhaging. Her babies were sent to rescue but did not survive.

As part of a plea bargain, Chavez pleaded guilty to one count of disturbing the peace, in violation of penal code § 415 (case number 3PY06470). Chavez was sentenced to 18 months' probation, \$500 payment to spcaLA, PC 597h (animal cruelty) counseling and court fines, in Los Angeles Superior Court on Wednesday April 16, 2014. The case was prosecuted by Deputy City Attorney Don Cocek.

"The Los Angeles justice system takes animal cruelty seriously, regardless of the species of the victim, as is evident in this case," said spcaLA President, Madeline Bernstein. "It doesn't matter if you think an animal is a pain or a pet, maliciously injuring or killing an animal is criminal."

spcaLA incorporated in 1877 to enforce California's first animal cruelty statute. Today, spcaLA will continue to investigate animal cruelty and prosecute offenders, including those who intentionally maim, mutilate, torture or wound a living animal or who maliciously and intentionally kill an animal, as pursuant to California Penal Code Section 597.

Individuals who witness animal cruelty should report it by calling the spcaLA Animal Cruelty Tipline at 1-800-540-SPCA. spcaLA is the only private nonprofit animal welfare organization that is also Law Enforcement in the city of the Los Angeles.

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact Ana Bustilloz at 323-730-5300 x252, 323-707-1271 (cell), or by email at abustilloz@spcaLA.com.

About spcaLA

Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Los Angeles, or spcaLA, is an independent, nonprofit animal welfare organization serving Southern California since 1877. There is no national SPCA, parent organization, or umbrella group that provides financial support to spcaLA. Donations run programs and services including Cruelty Investigation, Disaster Animal Response Team, Humane Education, and a variety of shelter services.