



Ex-Cherokee County school officer who left K-9 in hot car pleads guilty

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By [Shaddi Abusaid](#), The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

A former Cherokee County Schools police officer whose K-9 partner died inside a hot car was sentenced to three years of probation after pleading guilty Monday to animal cruelty and obstruction.

Daniel Peabody, a 16-year veteran of the Cherokee County School District's police force, was arrested in June 2016 after leaving his police dog, Inka, inside his personal vehicle for nearly three hours after returning home from work.



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It was determined the 4-year-old Belgian Malinois, who had been assigned to Peabody several years earlier, died of heatstroke.

Investigators said Peabody, 53, left the dog in his car intentionally so he could help his wife with another animal inside their house. The former police lieutenant then forgot about the dog, he told authorities.

Temperatures that afternoon reached upwards of 90 degrees, investigators said, though it would have been much hotter inside the car with its windows

up. Peabody's vehicle, a 2001 Ford Crown Victoria, was not equipped to transport police dogs, the Cherokee County Marshal's Office said previously.



An investigation raised questions about another police dog that lived with Peabody after being retired from service. Investigators said Peabody told them that dog, a yellow Labrador named Dale, died after choking on a tennis ball.

“However, the investigation yielded evidence that Dale was in fact shot and killed by Peabody at his Paulding County home shortly after Dale was retired from service,” said Jamie Gianfala, deputy chief of the Cherokee County Marshal's Office.

Peabody told investigators he shot Dale in the head because the dog had health problems.

The discovery prompted police to arrest him on charges of animal cruelty and making false statements.

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“Daniel Peabody was aware of the dangers of leaving a dog in a closed vehicle without proper ventilation. Even so, he intentionally left Inka in his car with the windows rolled up, and then forgot about her,” said Lara Ashley Snow, Cherokee County's deputy chief assistant district attorney, who

prosecuted the case. “It is also troubling that the defendant chose to shoot and bury a family pet, then lied about it to law enforcement.”



The remains exhumed from Peabody’s former home, however, turned out not to be Dale but those of a third dog.

Snow acknowledged that prosecutors faced some “challenges” in their case against Peabody since Dale’s remains were never recovered and the statute of limitations for prosecuting the former cop for cruelty to animals had expired.

“Through this plea agreement, we were able to avoid a lengthy trial while ensuring that Mr. Peabody was convicted and held accountable for the death of both Inka and Dale, and that these crimes will remain on his record,” Cherokee County District Attorney Shannon Wallace said.

Peabody was sentenced to three years of probation, ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine and perform 120 hours of community service.

He cannot serve as a law enforcement officer for the duration of his sentence and is prohibited from owning or caring for animals for at least one year.

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