

## **Office of the Inspector General, USDA Investigation Developments**

[> June 9, 2005 <](#)

### **Arizona Ranch Owner Pleads Guilty to Animal Cruelty Charges (APHIS)**

On May 23, 2005, a Phoenix, Arizona, man pled guilty to two misdemeanor counts of Animal Cruelty in Yavapai County, Arizona, and was sentenced to 36 months probation. The OIG investigation disclosed that the Phoenix man was the owner of a ranch in Cordes, Arizona, where Hog–Dogging exhibitions were being held. On December 17, 2004, the Yavapai County Sheriff’s Office served a search warrant on the subject’s residence, where they seized 32 Black Russian hogs, approximately 17 dogs (including pit bulls), and livestock inspection documents that showed that the hogs were possibly shipped from Texas and/or California. Five blood samples drawn from the 32 hogs tested positive for pseudo rabies. It is not known how these hogs became infected with pseudo rabies. The Yavapai County Attorney’s Office prosecuted the case.

### **Alabama Grocer Sentenced for Food Stamp Fraud (FNS)**

On May 25, 2005, the owner of a Montgomery, Alabama, grocery store was sentenced in the District Court of the United States for the District of Alabama to serve 51 months imprisonment, followed by 36 months supervised release, and was ordered to pay a special assessment of \$100. The OIG investigation revealed that the owner made false statements to the Food and Nutrition Service on his application to participate in the Food Stamp Program. As a result, from September 1995 through April 1997, he illegally redeemed \$352,270 worth of food stamps. The owner was indicted in 2001. Upon his arrest in October 2002, he began feigning mental incompetence. After undergoing several psychological evaluations, the owner pled guilty on January 31, 2005, to one count of food stamp fraud.

### **Former Agency Employee Sentenced for Downloading Pornography (ARS)**

On May 27, 2005, a former Agricultural Research Service (ARS) agronomist was sentenced in the District Court of the United States for the District of Puerto Rico to serve 3 months imprisonment and 3 months home confinement, followed by 24 months supervised release. The OIG investigation disclosed that the employee used his USDA computer to download/possess child pornography. The investigation identified evidence including 10 images of child victims in the employee’s possession. The employee was indicted in December 2004 and pled guilty to receiving and possessing child pornography in March 2005. The agronomist resigned his position with ARS.

### **Two Arizona Individuals Sentenced, Ordered to Pay Restitution in WIC Fraud (FNS)**

On May 9, 2005, a Mesa, Arizona, woman was sentenced in the Superior Court of Arizona to serve 36 months of probation and 100 hours of community service and was ordered to pay \$10,630 in restitution. The OIG investigation revealed that a former Maricopa County Department of Public Health, Office of Nutrition Services employee created 11 fictitious Women, Infants and Children (WIC) files and issued 210 WIC checks totaling \$10,630. The employee and her accomplice, the Mesa, Arizona woman, used the checks to purchase powdered Enfamil formula and other WIC-approved food items. They then sold the powdered Enfamil formula to buyers and split the sales proceeds. The women were indicted in January 2005 and pled guilty to Arizona state felony charges in April 2005. On May 19, 2005, the former county employee was sentenced to serve 60 months of probation, and ordered to pay \$10,630 in restitution, jointly and severally with the individual mentioned above.

### **Tennessee Dairy Owner Sentenced, Fined for Environmental Violations (NRCS)**

On May 9, 2005, the owner of a Sante Fe, Tennessee, dairy was sentenced in the District Court of the United States for the Middle District of Tennessee to serve 36 months of probation and ordered to pay \$35,000 in fines and \$1,500 in restitution. The OIG investigation disclosed that the dairy owner knowingly violated environmental laws regarding animal waste systems. He had received \$50,000 from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to install and maintain an animal waste system on his dairy farm. The system was installed according to standards, but the dairy owner continued using unauthorized pipelines that fed wastewater directly into area streams. The owner was indicted in November 2004 and pled guilty in March 2005 to two misdemeanor violations of the Clean Water Act.