



Menacing Dogs From Vick Case Await Their Fate

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HANOVER, Va., Aug. 30 — These particular dogs do not have names anymore, just assigned numbers. They are too violent to be let free around others, so they spend their days in 4-by-8-foot pens at the Hanover County Animal Control Pound.

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Jay Paul for The New York Times

11 of the 55 Pit bulls owned by Atlanta falcons quarterback Michael Vick are being kept at Hanover County Animal Control until the trial.

“You don’t take two out at the same time,” said Kevin M. Kilgore, the chief animal control officer for Hanover County. “They would just start going at each other.”

The pound is the temporary home for 11 of the 53 pit bulls that were recovered in April during a search of the property owned by [Michael Vick](#) in Surry, Va., where dogfighting took place.

Over the next few weeks, animal behaviorists will examine each dog and make recommendations.

On Monday, when Vick became the fourth defendant in the case to plead guilty, he agreed to pay for all the costs involving the care of the dogs, “including if necessary, the long-term care and/or the humane euthanasia of some or all of those animals as may be directed by the court in this case.”

Vick, who has been suspended indefinitely by the N.F.L., and the others pleaded guilty to federal felony charges for their involvement with the dogfighting. The first of their sentencing hearings is Nov. 30. The fate of the dogs, however, is all but sealed.

After the behaviorists make their recommendations, Kilgore said, he can try to have those few that are suitable put up for adoption or put them down.

“One of them may make a nice pet for someone that is an expert in pit bulls and knows exactly what they were doing with it,” he said while providing a tour of the kennel Thursday to a reporter and a photographer from The New York Times. “But the majority of people that want dogs like this want them for all the wrong reasons.”

Kilgore, a burly man with blond hair, acknowledged that he did not feel comfortable around the dogs when they were not leashed. Most of these dogs charge the front of their cages and gnaw at the metal that surrounds them when they see or smell another dog. They are allowed out only to see a veterinarian once a week or when kennel workers

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clean the pens.

“They can’t calm down in a kennel environment,” Kilgore said. “Their prey drive and activity level are so high that if not controlled, they can be very dangerous.”

He added, “They latch on to any sound or noise.”

Vick’s dogs take up the entire back section of the kennel. Most approach the front of their pens and try to lick Kilgore’s fingers, but a few hide in the back of their cages.

Dog No. 43, a wiry, black pit bull, spends most of her time scampering from one end of her pen to the other. Her chest and neck are covered with scars. In the next pen, the nose of No. 30, a tan pit bull, is also marked by scars. She stands at the front of her cage, calmly peering out. But her mood changed when a photographer used a flash.

“That dog will lick your fingers, but her emotions can range,” Kilgore said. “She can get very irritated.”

The dog began to growl. “Now she is not happy,” Kilgore said. “She is nice, but it is all genetics, sometimes.”

A few pens away, No. 41 seemed so timid that he hid in the back of his cage and ducked his head behind his hind, a sign of past abuse or socialization problems.

“It’s very sad,” Kilgore said. “He is clearly not happy. We, as humans, have bred animals for our own pleasure for thousands of years. In this case, we have bred animals to fight.”

[On Friday, John Goodwin, the deputy manager of the Animal Cruelty Campaign for the [Humane Society of the United States](#), said that fighting dogs were bred to have boundless energy. When they are placed in confinement, he said, their condition rapidly deteriorates.

[“They can’t burn off their excess energy in their pens, and they start to demonstrate neurotic behavior and oftentimes tear their kennel run to pieces,” Goodwin said. “They tear the fencing and destroy any blankets or toys they are given.

“This is why we favor quick judgments about what will happen with seized fighting dogs.”]

At night, the lights at the pound are turned off in the hope that the dogs will rest. The local authorities said they kept a close eye on the building to ward off people who might attempt to take one of the animals.

The dogs have been here for three weeks. They had been at the Surry Animal Control Pound, which is less than 10 miles from Vick’s property. But that pound could house only about 15 dogs, and the Surry County animal control officer was overwhelmed, Kilgore said.

“They have put on a lot of weight since they got here, and that is good,” Kilgore said. “It may be diet. Some have gained 7 pounds, some 10. We may feed them more. We have probably catered a little more to them because of where they have been and what they have been through.”

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