

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS – PLYMOUTH DISTRICT  
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NEWS RELEASE  
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**MASSACHUSETTS APPEALS COURT AFFIRMS WOMAN'S CAT CRUELTY  
CONVICTIONS**

**BROCKTON** – Plymouth County District Attorney Timothy J. Cruz announced that the Massachusetts Appeals Court today issued a decision in Commonwealth vs. Heidi Erickson, a woman convicted on animal cruelty charges in the negligent care of multiple cats.

On December 16, 2010, a jury found Heidi Erickson, guilty of eight counts of animal cruelty involving eight Persian cats. Erickson was living in an apartment in Plymouth in March, 2009 at the time the cats were discovered, malnourished, sickly, and covered with feces. After her conviction, Erickson filed two motions for a new trial, which were both denied by the Trial Court. Erickson's direct appeal and her appeals from the denials of her motions for a new trial were consolidated.

In their unpublished decision today, the Massachusetts Appeals Court rejected Erickson on six different claims. The Court determined that the trial judge did not abuse her discretion by limiting the defendant's expert's testimony where the expert was favorable to the defense. There was sufficient evidence of animal cruelty as to all of the cats, and the judge properly closed the courtroom briefly to determine whether jurors had been exposed to an extraneous influence.

The Court rejected her claim that the deposition of an official from the Town of Plymouth's health department, which was not available at the time of the motion to suppress, cast doubt on the motion judge's decision to deny Erickson's motion to suppress. The Appeals Court also rejected Erickson's claim that search warrants issued in March of 2009 were not based on probable cause. Lastly, the Appeals Court denied Erickson's claim that she should only have been convicted of one count of animal cruelty where the eight cats constituted a "cache" of cats. The Massachusetts animal cruelty statute refers to cruelty towards "an animal," indicating the Legislature's intent to prosecute instances of cruelty toward individual animals.

"We are pleased with the Appeals Court's decision today," DA Cruz said. "These cats were found severely malnourished and abused and deserved more than that from their owner."

Assistant District Attorneys Doug Humphrey and Kimberly Cronin handled the trial and Assistant District Attorney Keara Kelley handled the motions for a new trial in the case. Assistant District Attorney Carolyn Burbine handled the case on appeal for the Commonwealth.

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