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### **TAUNTON MAN ARRAIGNED ON ANIMAL CRUELTY CHARGES**

**BROCKTON** – A Taunton man was arraigned this morning in Brockton District Court on a charge of animal cruelty stemming from the discovery of a severely malnourished dog in his possession, Plymouth County District Attorney Timothy J. Cruz has announced.

Devin Preeper, 27, appeared in court via a summons arraignment and is charged with one count of animal cruelty. He was released on personal recognizance and ordered not to own any domesticated animals. The Commonwealth had requested Preeper be held on \$25,000 cash bail.

On November 24, West Bridgewater Police conducted a traffic stop on North Main Street for a red-light violation. During the traffic stop, officers noticed a severely emaciated puppy in the vehicle. The driver, identified as Preeper, told officers he had found the dog the night before in the area of Copeland Street in Brockton and recovered the puppy to care for it. He added he did not call police or animal control since it was late in the evening, but he had called Brockton Animal Control that morning. While portions of the defendant's story were corroborated — Preeper did make a call to Brockton Animal Control on November 24 prior to the traffic stop — responding officers remained skeptical of him finding and taking in the puppy the night before.

Officers instructed Preeper to take the puppy to the Westbridge Veterinary Referral Hospital in West Bridgewater for evaluation. While there, Preeper admitted to officers he had owned the puppy for about six to eight months and had been unable to properly care for it. The defendant added the puppy had inadvertently consumed birth control pills and UTI medication during his ownership of the dog. Preeper agreed to surrender the puppy and was informed he would be charged with animal cruelty.

The puppy, since renamed Sprout, was taken to the Animal Protection Center of Southeastern Massachusetts for further medical treatment. Personnel at the shelter noted this is one of the worst starvation cases they had seen and added Sprout required 24/7 care due to the puppy's extreme physical condition. Sprout also received care at Tufts Veterinary Emergency Treatment & Specialties.

Preeper is next scheduled to appear in court on February 17.