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Kaufert to Explore Options to Fix Animal Cruelty Loophole

Judge's dismissal of charges in Kuenzi case shows need for clarification of state law

For Immediate Release

July 2, 2009

MADISON – Rep. Dean Kaufert [R – Neenah] announced today that he will be working with colleagues in the Legislature on an initiative to clarify Wisconsin law relating to animal cruelty regulations. A potential problem with current law was brought to light recently as a result of a Waupaca County judge's dismissal of felony animal cruelty charges against two defendants accused of running down and killing deer with their snowmobiles.

"To equate a pack of snowmobiles running down and killing deer with legal hunting is a slap in the face to all legitimate hunters in our state," Kaufert said. "This interpretation of state law does not make a lot of sense and is certainly not the intent of the statute. The decision will likely be appealed, but I think we also may need to look at clarifying current law. I have requested that the Legislative Reference Bureau develop draft language to clarify the intent of this statute to prevent this from happening again in the future."

There is a provision under current state law that animal cruelty charges cannot be brought against people who are hunting. Kaufert noted that he wants to keep this provision in place to protect legitimate hunters, but narrow the language to make clear it applies only to people engaging in legitimate and recognized methods of hunting. "I don't know anyone who would say that a snowmobile is a legitimate way to go deer hunting," Kaufert added.

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