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STATE OF WISCONSIN CIRCUIT COURT DODGE COUNTY

STATE OF WISCONSIN
Plaintiff,

DA Case No.: 2025DD001051
Assigned DA/ADA: Andrea M Will
Agency Case No.: 25-17845

Vs.

Richard J. Van Buren
W7153 Oakwood Road
Waupun, WI 53963
DOB: 08/15/1969
Sex/Race: M/W
Eye Color: Blue
Hair Color: Brown
Height: 6 ft 0 in
Weight: 300 lbs
Alias: Also Known As Richard James
Vanburen

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

Defendant,

FILED
06-20-2025
Clerk of Circuit Court
Dodge County, WI.
2025CF000219
Honorable Brian A.
Pfitzinger
Branch 1

The undersigned, being first duly sworn, states that:

Count 1: MISTREATMENT OF ANIMALS

The above-named defendant on or about Tuesday, June 17, 2025, in the Town of Chester, Dodge County, Wisconsin, did intentionally treat an animal, a dog, in a cruel manner, resulting in the animal's death, contrary to sec. 951.02, 939.50(3)(i) Wis. Stats., a Class I Felony, and upon conviction may be fined not more than Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000), or imprisoned not more than three (3) years and six (6) months, or both.

PROBABLE CAUSE:

The undersigned has reviewed the reports of the law enforcement officers referenced below and believes them to be true and correct as these reports were created by law enforcement officers while they were acting in their official capacity.

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From the reports of Deputy Daniel Croft of the Dodge County Sheriff's Office (modified for clarity and redactions):

On June 17, 2025, I, Deputy Daniel Croft #224 of the Dodge County Sheriff's Office responded to an animal abuse-type complaint located at W7153 Oakwood Road in the town of Chester, Dodge County, Wisconsin.

A citizen witness reported the incident stated that a dog was killed by someone with the last name of Van Buren and she was distraught.

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A statement was taken from the citizen witness. She stated that she had located a Golden Retriever/mix dog along the Horicon Auto Tour which she walks every day. She knew it was very hot out and the dog looked like it wanted help and was dehydrated as it barked at her. The citizen witness coaxed it to come into her vehicle after about 45 minutes. She contacted the City of Waupun Police Department and the Dodge County Sheriff's Office and was directed to take it to the humane society. The humane society redirected her to the town of Chester chairperson, Richard Van Buren.

The citizen witness arrived at Richard Van Buren's residence with another subject, who I later identified as Michael J. Kuzulka, the town of Chester supervisor. Richard Van Buren was "already pissy" because the dog was barking at him. Richard Van Buren yelled at the dog to "shut up" and said "You little fucker knock it off." He screamed at the dog and "didn't give him a chance". The initial interview with the citizen witness was ended at this time as she was highly emotional. A second interview was conducted with the witness in person. The citizen witness stated that she drove around with the dog for a while to help it cool off. She made arrangements with the humane society to have the dog taken to "Van Buren's" residence where he would kennel the dog.

Upon arrival, she spoke with Richard Van Buren briefly from inside her car and said "This dog does not like guys," and attempted to give him a leash. Richard Van Buren went into his garage and retrieved a light tan-colored dog carrier and retrieved another leash. He then used the leash as a "noose". He then said to the dog, "If you little mother fucker if you don't stop I'm gonna break in this window." The citizen witness demanded "Let him go!" and was forced to roll down the window so Richard Van Buren did not break it.

Richard Van Buren took the leash and reached in towards the dog, which was seated on the front passenger-side door. The citizen witness then gave him the leash she was given by the humane society to use, and he took that one because it was "bigger and thicker". After getting it around the dog's neck, he pulled it straight and choked the dog. Richard Van Buren reportedly threw the dog to the ground and said something like, "This is what we do on this farm when dogs bite." Richard Van Buren never opened the car door and pulled it through the window. This is when the dog bit Richard Van Buren in the hand. After pulling the dog out of the car, Richard Van Buren lifted up on the leash using both hands raised up in the air and extended outwards. The citizen witness said all the dog's legs were off the ground and suspended about two feet in the air. It foamed at the mouth. She tried to intervene and begged him to let her help the dog or let it go. Richard Van Buren replied something like, "No, this fucking dog bit me! It's going to die." He suspended the dog up in the air again and at this time it was limp near the cage.

Two statements were also taken from Michael Kuzulka, who was also present when this event took place. Michael Kuzulka expressed the dog "went nuts" and "drew blood" on him and it was "either the dog or Rich". Michael Kuzulka said he (Richard Van Buren) held the dog away from him and the dog became "hung". He added, if he had added slack to the leash "that dog woulda who knows what".

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Michael Kuzulka stated the citizen witness remained in her vehicle the entire time and he remained several feet away watching. Richard Van Buren tried to put one leash on the dog and then retrieved a different leash to use. Michael Kuzulka said the dog was continuously attempting to attack Richard Van Buren once it was removed from the vehicle.

In the follow up interview, Kuzulka demonstrated how the dog was lifted out of the vehicle and showed his two hands extended up and away from his body; the same way citizen witness had to me. She motioned that there was a struggle with the dog for a few seconds as he shuffled over to the cage, which was about 10 feet away on the passenger side of the car. Michael Kuzulka bent his legs and leaned in a back-and-forth motion to show how Richard Van Buren pushed the dog into the crate, head first. He clarified the way the dog was carried in an upright manner the entire time with at least the front legs off the ground. He was unsure if the rear legs were off the ground as well. He further demonstrated that when Richard Van Buren had the dog lifted in the air, he said something like, "I gotta handle this fuckin dog." In Michael Kuzulka's opinion, by the time the dog was removed from the car and held upright, it had already died because it might have snapped its neck. He agreed the act was violent and possibly in a reaction from Richard Van Buren being bit.

1, Deputy Croft, also contacted Richard J Van Buren. The first contact was via telephone. Van Buren advised he was the town of Chester chairperson. Town chairpersons are commonly designated to be responsible when an at-large animal is located and seized where there is no contract with the humane society for pickup. The town of Chester is one of these that does not have a contract with the Dodge County Humane Society.

Richard Van Buren advised he was contacted by a citizen witness of a dog that had been picked up along the Horicon Auto Tour off State Highway 49. He stated the citizen witness told him the dog was "very aggressive". Van Buren stated the citizen witness brought the dog to his farm at W7153 Oakwood Road in the town of Chester as protocol. Richard Van Buren stated he tried to "calm it down", which continued for 10 to 15 minutes. He finally admitted he got a rope around the dog's neck to act as a choke collar. Richard Van Buren then opened the door with his other hand to pass the rope through and was bit by the dog on his left pinky finger. He said it "would not go in the kennel" and "succumbed to the choke collar". Richard Van Buren admitted dealing with aggressive dogs doesn't usually "end well" and indicated he had dealt with them in the past in his capacity as the town chair. Richard Van Buren admitted the choke collar was "too tight for too long probably", which was why the dog died. Richard Van Buren believed the dog was an adult male Golden Retriever and was cared for as it had a flea collar on.

In the second contact with Van Buren, Richard Van Buren said he usually keeps a stray dog for seven days and after that, he "takes care of it", which I clarified meant he shoots it with a gun. He has had to do that one other time in his experience dealing with dogs.

In this case, the citizen witness handed the leash to him from inside the car. He stated at this time, the dog was being aggressive. He stated that he was able to get the leash

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on the dog. He then opened the car door and grabbed the leash to take hold of it, which is when he was bit. He admitted he was "mad" because it bit him and his finger was bleeding. He "drug" the dog out of the car and citizen witness came outside and stood by the kennel and assisted in placing the dog inside.

Richard Van Buren showed me how he held the leash. He held his right arm up higher than his left arm and kept the leash taught. This was different than how the citizen witness and Michael Kuzulka showed me. He admitted the dog's front legs were off the ground but said, "I do not believe so," when asked about the hind legs. Richard Van Buren estimated the time from when the dog was pulled out of the vehicle to the time it was at the kennel was around 30 seconds. He said the dog did not make it into the kennel. He believed the dog died from a "lack of air".

The body of the dog was collected for further investigation.

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Based on the foregoing, the complainant believes this complaint to be true and correct.

EXT=CODE 1

Subscribed and Sworn to me on 06/20/25

Electronically Signed By:

Shawn N Woller

Assistant District Attorney

State Bar #: 1084308

Electronically Signed By:

Detective Rolfs #205

Complainant