

May 20, 2025

Sonia Hagood, Esq.  
2nd Judicial District  
320 W. Court Street • Box 212  
Paragould, AR 72450

Dear Prosecutor Hagood,

On behalf of Alley Cat Allies and our supporters in West Memphis, Arkansas, I am writing in support of your prosecution of Charles Thessing. Thessing, a now-suspended priest, stands accused of torturing two cats who he trapped and drowned in a water tank on his property.

Alley Cat Allies is the leading advocacy organization with a mission to protect and improve the lives of all cats and kittens. Since our founding in 1990, we have worked in communities large and small to develop humane, evidence-based policies for cats and take strong action, including in court, against incidents of cruelty to cats.

Far too often, our judicial system does not adequately recognize the implications of cruelty to animals and, as a result, does not work to ensure the abusers receive a punishment that reflects the severity of the crime. To underestimate the depravity of animal cruelty and the harm it causes is to fail to recognize cats as sentient beings with inherent value who suffer and feel pain, and deserve neither. It is also a grave failure to grasp the role of cruelty to cats in the greater landscape of violence in our society.

As you may know, the link between animal cruelty and child abuse, domestic violence, and adverse mental health and community health outcomes is well established, and research has found that violence against animals is predictive of, and often co-occurring with, violence against humans. To protect us all, animals and people, it is critical to enforce our animal cruelty laws.

We appreciate your efforts to pursue animal cruelty charges in this case and to seek appropriate punishment.

Alley Cat Allies offers continued support and assistance to ensure this case concludes in a manner that brings justice to the victims and sets a standard for future investigation and prosecution of animal cruelty. Alley Cat Allies can provide legal assistance at no cost for this case. Our team includes experts in animal cruelty prosecutions who can research legal issues, provide information regarding veterinarians and other expert witnesses, assist with pleadings, submit *amicus curiae* briefs in support of the prosecution, and even sit second chair to assist with trial. Please contact me to discuss how we can help.

Sincerely,



DanaMarie Pannella  
*Director of Law and Policy*

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