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EX-SHERIFF SENTENCED TO 19 MONTHS IN PRISON

HARRISONBURG, VA, December 18, 2009 – Last Chance for Animals’ (LCA) exclusive undercover investigation of the Little Boxwood Cockfighting Pit in Stanley, VA, provided the FBI with crucial information which led to ex-sheriff Daniel W. Presgraves’ guilty plea to racketeering on September 3, 2009. Presgraves was sentenced today to 19 months in prison during a hearing in U.S. District Court in Harrisonburg. Presgraves will pay a \$1,000 fine, as well as restitution to victims. He has already forfeited \$75,000. Judge Glen Conrad said Presgraves had lost his ability to harm the public by being stripped of his duties as sheriff.

Presgraves addressed the court as well: “I violated the trust of the people of Page County that they placed in me and I’m deeply sorry,” said Presgraves.

Presgraves was alleged to have taken bribes in exchange for his silence of the cockfighting pit. By pleading guilty in September, Presgraves avoided going to trial on 21 federal racketeering counts, which included: money laundering, mail fraud, cockfighting-related conspiracy, and violating the civil rights of female subordinates.

LCA’s Special Investigative Unit (SIU) met with the USDA, FBI and the Assistant U.S. Attorney in Roanoke, VA, and turned over all their pertinent information on Little Boxwood. As a result of this investigation, the Animal Fighting Venture Prohibition law (U.S. Code-Title 7, Chapter 54, Section 2156) was used for the first time in U.S. history.

Pictures of dead chickens, a cockpit, and fight schedules were among the evidence found at the Boxwood Pit, as well as a photo of a “Sheriff’s Association Cockfighting Handout.”

In 2007, LCA’s SIU’s undercover investigation was responsible for one of the largest cockfighting busts in U.S. history. LCA’s SIU provided the necessary information to the authorities, which led to a raid on a popular cockfighting arena near Van Buren, AR and 76 felony arrests.

“We want to thank Tom Bondurant of the Western District of VA U.S. Attorney’s office, the Winchester resident agency of the FBI, the USDA OIG office in Beltsville, MD, the IRS, and the state police who helped with the raid,” says Chris DeRose, President and founder of LCA. “This is a notice to all public officials in the U.S. who turn a blind eye on animal fighting.”

Last Chance for Animals (LCA), a national animal rights organization based in Los Angeles, has been active for more than two decades. Founded and led by animal expert, author, and actor, Chris DeRose, LCA’s roots began in exposing the inherent cruelty of vivisection. LCA fights for the rights of animals by conducting investigations that expose animal cruelty, launching public awareness campaigns, pushing animal friendly legislation and helping prosecute animal abusers. For more information, visit www.LCAanimal.org

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