



Fairfield County Public Information

250 N. Walnut Drive

Winnsboro, S.C. 29180

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fairfield County Makes Statement Regarding the January 31st Incident at the Fairfield County Animal Shelter

Winnsboro, SC— March 27th, 2026 — On Saturday, January 31st, 2026, an incident occurred between 2 trustees, from the Fairfield County Detention Center, that were at the Fairfield County Animal Shelter tending to the animals and cleaning kennels during the snow storm that struck South Carolina that weekend.

Police Report of the Incident from January 31st, 2026:

Fairfield County Sheriff's Office was called to the shelter in regards to a fight between 2 trustees. Trustee 1 saw Trustee 2 spraying 2 dogs with a water hose in an attempt to separate 2 dogs that became entangled. An argument ensued between the 2 trustees. Trustee 1 went to another part of the facility, retrieved a shovel and struck Trustee 2 in the head with the shovel. The Sheriff's Office was called about the altercation between trustees; not about dog fighting. There was no evidence to support the accusation of intentional dog fighting.

Fairfield County Community and Safety Services Director, who oversees Animal Control and the Animal Shelter, immediately went on the scene as soon as he was notified, which was very shortly afterwards. An investigation did occur which determined that there was no intentional effort by inmates to fight dogs.

Statement from Fairfield County Animal Shelter Administration, in regards to the incident with the dogs:

This incident did not involve intentional "dog fighting." As the trustees were attempting to clean the kennel of one dog, another dog was able to get out of its kennel due to it not being secured correctly. This caused one dog to attack another. The water coming from the water hose that was being used to clean the kennel was turned toward the dogs to break them up from

fighting. The Rottweiler named Princess suffered a superficial wound to the right upper leg. There was minimal bleeding and no injuries to her face as to indicate "dog fighting." The dog was taken to the Vet room at the Animal Shelter, where the Shelter Director and a shelter volunteer talked with a vet tech on the phone. The employees described the injury and were informed how to bandage and treat the dog. This was during the winter storm where travel was limited due to critical road conditions. Princess was previously scheduled to be euthanized on the following Monday due to severe heartworms, which were causing a strain on her heart. Sadly, Princess passed away during the early morning hours of Monday morning, where shelter staff found her. There was no indication that her death was caused by the prior incident.

Inmates have been working at the shelter for quite some time without incident. They do have supervision while they are working at the shelter. Since this issue, we also have a detention center officer to check in on them while they are at the shelter. Trustees are normally at the shelter from approximately 8am until approximately 10:30am on Saturdays and Sundays.

Volunteer Status:

Since January 2026, Fairfield County has made a significant investment to the daily operation of the animal shelter. Fulltime staff was significantly expanded, which has allowed a level of care and attention not previously possible. As part of the auditing process, Fairfield County determined there was no formal agreement or vetting of Animal Shelter volunteers or support organizations. This is a vital process to ensure the health and safety of not only the animals in the shelter but also the safety of the staff, due to the access to potentially dangerous animals, animals held as court evidence, and access to inmates. Active Fairfield County Animal Shelter volunteers were notified addressing the pausing of the volunteer program, until a formal process for vetting volunteers and support agencies could be created and implemented. Fairfield County Administration is working on a volunteer policy and requirements for any volunteer or organization that wants to help with the Animal Shelter.

Statement regarding shelter animal feeding:

A statement was made that the animals in the shelter were being starved and only received 1 cup of food per day.

Response: Animals were, and are, fed based on the weight of the animal. It is not a single cup of food per day. Based upon observation of another shelter that did feed once per day, Fairfield County began doing this. Again – it was not a “cup of food” per day, it was one feeding per day, which is a huge difference.

County Statement:

After a thorough review of the incident by Fairfield County Sheriff’s Office and Fairfield County Administration, no evidence of intentional dog fighting was found. Since taking over their respective roles with the Fairfield County Animal Control and Animal Shelter, the Community and Safety Services Director and Animal Shelter Director have been diligent in auditing every process the shelter has to ensure the well-being of any animal taken into the care of the facility. Facilities are cleaned on a consistent and regular basis, meals are served on a consistent basis, attention to individual animal health matters are addressed and the overall quality of life for all animals in the Fairfield County Animal Shelter are in the best interest of the animals.

On January 31st incident between 2 trustees, Fairfield County Animal Control staff was responsive in their actions to secure the location, Fairfield County Sheriff’s Office did a thorough investigation, to summarize, there was no intentional dog fighting (only an incident between 2 trustees) and Fairfield County Animal Shelter staff operated quickly and efficiently in their care for a wounded animal.

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