



Department of Justice

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Eastern District of Tennessee

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PAUL BLACKBURN PLEADS GUILTY TO HORSE PROTECTION ACT VIOLATIONS

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn.-- Paul Blackburn, 35, of Shelbyville, Tenn., pleaded guilty today, in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee, Chattanooga, to conspiracy to violate the Horse Protection Act. Sentencing has been set for January 23, 2012, at 9:00 a.m., in U.S. District Court in Chattanooga. Blackburn faces a term of up to one year in prison and a \$3,000 fine.

On April 26, 2011, a federal grand jury in Chattanooga returned a 34-count superseding indictment against Barney Davis, 38, of Lewisburg, Tenn., Christen Altman, 25, of Shelbyville, Tenn., Jeffery Bradford, 33, of Lewisburg, Tenn., and Paul Blackburn, 35, of Shelbyville, Tenn., charging them with violations of the federal Horse Protection Act and related financial crimes. Hearings for Davis, Altman and Bradford are scheduled in U.S. District Court, Chattanooga, on November 8, 2011.

According to the factual basis presented during the arraignment, Blackburn, along with Davis, Altman, and Bradford, conspired to violate the federal Horse Protection Act by "soring" horses and falsifying entry forms and other related paperwork. "Soring" is a unlawful practice where items like bolts are driven into horse's hoofs, foreign objects are attached to the legs of the animals, or chemicals are used to produce pain and sensitivity to alter the gait of a horse. The altered gait is valued at horse competitions.

This indictment was the result of an ongoing investigation by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General (OIG). The USDA-OIG has the authority to investigate criminal violations of the Horse Protection Act including allegations related to soring and false entries or statements. The OIG investigation of this case was initiated in August 2010.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Steven Neff and Kent Anderson represented the United States.

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