

# Alton Police hoping suspect in alleged animal abuse "turns herself in"

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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**ALTON** - Captain Scott Golike of the Alton Police Department said police are hoping Stephanie Watson of Alton turns herself into authorities after several animal rights advocates and veterinarians have deemed she was at least partially responsible for the dire health conditions of April the pit bull.

[A story earlier this week on Riverbender.com](#) detailed the horrific account of April, a pit bull who was brought to Hope Animal Rescues in April in dire health. Jackie Spiker, co-founder of Hope Animal Rescues, told Riverbender.com the organization's other found, Kim Lee, was told April was found in a ditch.

April was visibly pregnant, Spiker said, and reeked of infection. They took her to Daniel-Randall Veterinary Clinic, where she was examined by two veterinarians and four technicians, who cancelled all other surgeries and appointments to care for the dog. They performed an emergency Cesarean section, and found the entire litter dead. Apparently, April had been attempting to give birth for days, but her amniotic sacs had ruptured, killing all of her potential puppies.

Those little bodies decomposing and rotting inside of her body caused April to contract sepsis, which took veterinarians as long as two hours to clean. Following her treatment, she was sent to the intensive care unit at Veterinary Specialty Services in Manchester, Missouri, where she received round-the-clock treatment for two days. She was then taken back to Hope Animal Rescues, but had to be rushed back to Veterinary Specialty Services, because she began to hemorrhage.

Racking up bills of more than \$7,500, April overcame the odds and received a brighter prognosis each day, but developed a grade four heart murmur, which has since been decreased to a grade two, due to the amount of stress put upon her.

April has since been adopted by a vet tech who cared for her.



Further investigation, however, revealed April had not been found in the ditch, but was instead owned by Watson who allegedly intended to sell the puppies for a profit, because they were a "desirable pit bull-terrier hybrid known for their reduced size and temperament."

Watson was charged with failure to perform owner's duties, a Class B misdemeanor, following an April 20, 2017, investigation by the Alton Police Department. That charge was upgraded by the Madison County State's Attorney's Office on May 10, 2017, to aggravated animal cruelty, a Class 4 felony.

"Shortly, thereafter, the case was reviewed by the state's attorney, who reviewed the medical records and got the opinion of the veterinarian," Golike said. "It was then upgraded to aggravated animal cruelty, which is a Class 4 felony. The state's attorney's office is awaiting more medical records from other facilities, which treated the dog."

Currently, Golike said Watson is not in custody, despite attempts by the Alton Police Department to carry out their arrest warrant.

"At this point, she clearly knows she is wanted," Golike said. "We're hoping she turns herself in."

A Class 4 felony has a maximum sentencing guideline of one to four years.