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DOGS' OWNER ORDERED TO JAIL

ROBIN FITZGERALD/THE SUN HERALD

CRIME: Judge sends man to jail on animal cruelty charges involving more than a dozen dogs kept at his beachfront property. GULFPORT --- A 74-year-old Henderson Point man sentenced to jail and fined \$13,000 on 13 counts of animal cruelty plans to appeal the conviction, his attorney said.

William Wall Morris, who lives in a camper with fences on the beach in rural Pass Christian, was ordered to jail Tuesday for failing to provide proper sustenance or sanitary conditions for his Weimaraners. The case involves more than a dozen dogs and a long-term investigation by animal control officers with the Harrison County Sheriff's Department.

Justice Court Judge Bruce Strong said officers tried to work with Morris to make sure the dogs were inoculated and cared for properly, "but I think he had so many dogs that it just got to be too much for him."

Morris was arrested in court after declining to refute the charges. Roberts sentenced him to 60 days in jail, suspended 55 days, and fined him \$1,000 per dog, or \$13,000.

Wayne Woodall, Morris' attorney, said Morris didn't contest the charges because he wants to appeal his case in County Court. **Woodall** said he asked Roberts to change the fine to a bail bond so Morris doesn't have to stay in jail through Sunday.

Woodall said officers a month ago seized 13 dogs inside an inner fence and four dogs running loose behind an outer fence. The latter four have been returned, but **Woodall** said one of them "died from being brutalized while in custody."

Pat Bushman, director of the Humane Society of South Mississippi, and court-appointed veterinarian Ann Cook said they couldn't comment Wednesday because of the pending appeal.

Woodall claims the case is a matter of "harassment, personalities and neighbors' complaints about the dogs and the property being overgrown, not like the residential summer homes."

