

### Atchison Co Alligator Case Takes New Twist

(KAIR)--New developments in the case of the alligator captured this week at the Atchison County Lake, with a Horton man now accused of animal cruelty in connection with the animal.

Atchison County Sheriff Jack Laurie says that's one of two animal cruelty investigations underway related to the alligator.

Issued a summons to appear in court on a charge of animal cruelty is 53-year-old Dennis Statler. He allegedly had shot the alligator, prior to its capture by the Sheriff's Office and the Humane Society of Atchison.

Laurie says a bullet wound was found between the animal's eyes on its snout.

Statler, the lake's caretaker, has been cooperating with the investigation, and a representative of Greenwood, Missouri's Monkey Island animal sanctuary, where the alligator was taken, believes it will fully recover.

The 3 to 3 ½ foot alligator was spotted Saturday by fishermen at the Atchison County Lake, which led to the successful rescue on Monday.

Laurie says it's believed the alligator had been someone's pet, but was released when it began to grow. That's the key to the second animal cruelty investigation, with investigators seeking whoever owned the animal.

Laurie says the release at the lake area amounts to animal cruelty, because the alligator would have likely died in the approaching winter months.

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