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Animal Advocate Prosecuted for Reporting Horrific Violence Against Animals to Law Enforcement

Charges are “Blatantly Unconstitutional” Attorneys Say

July 3, 2025, OGLE COUNTY, IL – Today, attorneys appeared in Ogle County Circuit Court for what they have described as an unconstitutional prosecution of an animal advocate who reported severe animal torment to law enforcement. Jodie Wiederkehr has been charged with two felonies and one misdemeanor, potentially landing her in prison for having contacted the Ogle County,

IL, Sheriff's Office to report unlawful animal cruelty at an unsanctioned rodeo. Attorneys say the charges are a shocking violation of the First Amendment, specifically of Ms. Wiederkehr's right to petition the government. Her complaints arose out of [extensive documentation of extreme violence](#) inflicted on animals at steer tailing events.

"Instead of enforcing Illinois' animal cruelty law and their own ordinances to stop this horrific violence, the Ogle County Sheriff's Office has egregiously brought charges against a concerned community member for reporting unlawful activity to law enforcement," said Brad Thomson, Ms. Wiederkehr's lawyer with the [People's Law Office](#) in Chicago. "This is a violation of Ms. Wiederkehr's First Amendment rights and shows a callous disregard to the welfare of animals in Ogle County."

Animal protection organization SHowing Animals Respect & Kindness (SHARK) has collected [footage of so-called "steer tailing" in multiple Illinois counties](#), in which a rider on horseback chases down a running male cow, grabs onto the animal's tail forcefully, wraps the tail around his leg, and body slams the animal to the ground, inflicting grave injuries. The animals are then left to suffer without veterinary treatment or pain relief. According to attorneys, this treatment blatantly violates Illinois' animal cruelty law.

"This is part of a broader pattern across the country, in which law enforcement refuses to enforce laws that ostensibly protect animals, but goes to great effort and expense to harass and prosecute animal rights activists," said Steffen Seitz, litigation fellow at the [Animal Activist Legal Defense Project](#). "Law enforcement's motivation to silence and punish animal advocates, while protecting industries that inflict so much suffering and violence, is not only legally wrong, it is morally reprehensible."

Ms. Wiederkehr and other concerned citizens have reported this illegal torture and mutilation for four years, but law enforcement has taken no action. Moreover, the Ogle County Sheriff's Office has repeatedly refused to allow Ms. Wiederkehr to speak to law enforcement, even blocking her from accessing and posting on Ogle County's official Facebook page, which attorneys say is a violation of the First Amendment.

"I cannot comprehend how inflicting such gratuitous violence on these docile, sweet animals is considered entertainment," said Ms. Wiederkehr, a Chicago-based animal advocate and Campaigns Director for [SHowing Animals Respect and Kindness](#), which has worked to document and stop the violence at these events. "The very purpose of humane laws is to stop grievous practices like those we see at these brutal events, and it is the sheriff's job to enforce those laws—whether he approves of such callousness or not."

[Footage captured by advocates](#) shows animals having their tails violently ripped off, some who are paralyzed from the force, and animals suffering broken legs, necks, spines, and horns. In addition to life-threatening injuries resulting from steer tailing, the footage also shows participants beating animals, including deliberately kicking them in the face, biting their tails, whipping them repeatedly, and electrocuting them with 5000 volt prods, among other horrors.

Ms. Wiederkehr faces one charge of misdemeanor harassment and two felony charges of filing a false police report—which defense attorneys vehemently deny. She faces up to three years in prison. She will next appear in court on August 20, 2025.

[People's Law Office](#) is a Constitutional law firm based in Chicago handling criminal defense and civil rights matters on behalf of their clients and fighting against governmental abuses of power since 1969.

The [Animal Activist Legal Defense Project](#) at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law works to empower and defend animal advocates through activist defense, affirmative litigation, and training law students to join and transform the field of Animal Law. Learn more at [AALDP.com](#) and follow us at @AALDP_DU on [Twitter/X](#), [Instagram](#), and @AALDP-DU on [Bluesky](#).

SHowing Animals Respect & Kindness (SHARK) works daily to nonviolently battle animal abuse whenever and wherever possible. Learn more at [www.SharkOnline.org](#) and follow us at @SHARKOnline on Twitter/X, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok.

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