

Union Township man charged with animal cruelty for running over, killing puppy

A Union Township man has been criminally charged for running over a puppy with his vehicle in a crowded supermarket parking lot, causing its death, acting Union County Prosecutor Michael A. Monahan and Hillside Police Chief Vincent Ricciardi jointly announced Friday.

Luis Navarro, 73, is charged with a single count of third-degree animal cruelty.

Members of the Hillside Police Department responded to the ShopRite of Hillside on U.S. Route 22 East around 11 a.m. on Thursday to find the body of the puppy, a pit bull named Luna, according to Union County Assistant Prosecutor Patricia Cronin, the head of the newly formed humane animal treatment subsection of the Prosecutor's Office's Special Prosecutions Unit.

Hillside's investigation revealed that Navarro parked his dark gray Jeep SUV in the parking lot, walked over to the passenger's side, retrieved the puppy, and put it down on the pavement before backing out of his spot, striking the animal with a front and rear tire, Cronin said.

The entire incident was captured on surveillance video, which shows multiple vehicles coming and going from the parking lot and traveling up and down Route 22 at the time.

The Prosecutor's Office would like to thank Hillside Police Detective Sergeant Cosimo Tripoli, Detective Anthony D'Amore, Detective Steven Costa, and Police Officer Pamela McLucas for their swift and professional work on this case. Anyone with information about this matter, or anyone who may have

witnessed the incident, is being urged to contact D'Amore at 973-926-5800 or Cronin at 908-527-4169.

Navarro is scheduled to appear in Superior Court next on Monday, July 16.

Convictions on third-degree criminal charges are commonly punishable by 3 to 5 years in state prison.

These criminal charges are mere accusations. Each defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

<http://ucnj.org/prosecutor/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2018/06/6-29-2018-UCPO-Video.mp4>