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Owner of shot Siberian huskies: 'I will never forget'

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Author: Anthony Colarossi, staff writer

The video of a man shooting two Siberian huskies in an Orange County cow pasture went viral, gaining international attention, and on Tuesday, the dog owner cried on the stand while describing what it was like to see his dogs shot.

Christopher Butler, the dog owner, said he came upon the cow pasture in May 2008 and watched as one of his dogs, Raley, came toward him wounded.

"I said, 'Just stop shooting,'" Butler said. "He (the shooter) turned around and shot the other dog again."

That's when Butler ran to that dog, Hoochie, and held him on the ground.

Christopher Comins is charged with two felony counts of animal cruelty with a firearm in the May 19, 2008, incident.

Thomas Sommerville and fellow defense attorney Chandler Muller argued Monday that the two huskies had escaped their owner, found cattle in the pasture and were "in the process of killing these cattle."

Butler testified this afternoon that Hoochie was more seriously injured and looked like he might die. The dogs were later taken to a vet, where Hoochie stayed for five or six weeks before he could be taken home. Butler said the dog's eye was "hanging out" after the incident and the dog ultimately lost that eye.

Butler finished his testimony, saying the dogs live with him today in England. Butler had both dogs since they were pups. He knew it was possible the dogs could escape and take off if he took them off leash, which is what happened before the cow incident.

Butler said the pasture was about three miles from the home he was renting at the time. Muller, the defense attorney, asked why Butler did not conduct an active search for the dogs after they took off, noting that he did not call authorities or animal control for help. Butler said he cannot remember specifically what he did after the dogs ran away, but added, "I will never forget what happened in that field that day."

Earlier Tuesday, the owner of the cows, Gary Rumpza, testified, and said the cows were not injured by the dogs but "they were on the nervous side" following the incident with the huskies.

Assistant State Attorney Erin DeYoung objected to testimony about "the feelings of the cows," drawing laughter throughout the courtroom, but the witness was allowed to testify.

The state has one more witness who will testify today.

Caption: PHOTO: Butler . PHOTO: Comins

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