

North Wales man walks free with suspended sentence after admitting badger baiting and cruelty to dogs

Phil Stevens, 38, of Lon Lladfan, Prestatyn, has been sentenced to two years in prison, which has been suspended for 12 months, after pleading guilty to animal cruelty offences under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and the Animal Welfare Act 2006, including causing unnecessary suffering to his own dogs.

A joint investigation by North Wales Police and the RSPCA was initiated by the investigations team at Naturewatch Foundation following the discovery of disturbing photographs showing the brutal activities undertaken by Stevens.

He was also disqualified from keeping dogs for five years and ordered to undertake 180 hours community service, pay £500 costs and a victim surcharge of £128.

Stevens was photographed proudly showing off his injured dogs, which included severe facial and jaw injuries. He later admitted that they were caused by his sickening involvement in the illegal activity of badger baiting. He edited photographs with emojis to attempt to hide his face but was quickly identified.

Badger baiting is one of the most horrendous acts of animal cruelty, with dogs sent down badger setts to hold terrified badgers underground, whilst people dig their way to where the badger is held. Once exposed, the badger will be set on by the dogs, sometimes after being brutally disabled by those who enjoy watching the badger suffer whilst fighting for its life. The badger will usually be attacked until death by the dogs,

which also suffer horrendous injuries as a consequence.

Stevens' dogs were no different and one of his terriers, Jess, was found on the day of the warrant attempting to shelter in a plastic barrel with severe facial injuries. Stevens, a landscaper, allowed his dogs to be kept at his property, outside, in poor living conditions, as well as with the physical scars of his cruel activities. Thankfully, Jess has now been rehomed by the RSPCA.

Naturewatch Foundation's investigator tasked with this case said, "We commenced our investigation into Phil Stevens and suspected badger digging in early 2021 and were determined to seek justice for the animals who suffered so terribly at his hands. Wild mammals suffered a violent and protracted death and Stevens' dogs sustained serious injuries, purely for his entertainment. He failed to provide his dogs with veterinary treatment for their wounds, causing them to suffer further. The images of the conditions these poor dogs were found living in speak for themselves."

Campaign manager, Kate Parker, said, "Badger baiting has no place in modern society and Naturewatch Foundation, working in partnership with other agencies, will continue to investigate allegations and assist with enforcement to bring those like Stevens to justice."

She continued, "My thanks go to North Wales Police for actioning our investigation package and the RSPCA for taking on the prosecution. To those involved in the sickening activity of ripping apart British wildlife – you will be brought to justice."

If you believe you have information regarding named individuals hunting wildlife with dogs, please report it to the charity, in confidence.

[Online reporting form](#)

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More information and advice are available on the Naturewatch Foundation website: www.naturewatch.org