

SMACK AT PET 'QUACK'; NEW RAPS IN VET CASE

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An allegedly fake veterinarian, already accused of treating Brooklyn pets without a license, was back in the DA's doghouse yesterday, charged with offering his phony service to eight additional animal lovers.

Steven Vassall, 28, was arraigned on a new, 42-count indictment charging scheme to defraud, unlicensed practice, criminal mischief, aggravated cruelty and petit larceny.

The indictment includes the original charges, filed in February, that he illegally operated on a terrier, Burt, and agreed to neuter a cat, Fred.

Unbeknownst to Vassall, Fred was an "undercover" kitty, working with a detective as part of a sting set up by the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office.

The new charges include giving rabies vaccinations, removing a dog's teeth and performing minor skin surgeries, prosecutors said.

In the most serious case, a cat named Tiger died while in the care of the alleged quack. However, prosecutors concede there's no proof that Vassall did anything to cause the animal's demise.

"He claimed that he recognized what was wrong, removed the cat from the home, then contacted the family and said that the cat hadn't made it," said Assistant DA Carol Moran.

Vassall's lawyer, Royce Russell, declined to comment on the new charges. His client remains free on the same bail he posted at his first arraignment - \$2,500.

Many of the leads that resulted in the new charges came when customers of Vassall's read reports in The Post and other papers detailing his initial arrest.

"These are people who all thought they were getting a valuable service," said Moran, who supervised the investigation and has adopted Fred. "He betrayed them in a very real way."

She said many of those who called used Vassall for legitimate services - pet grooming and boarding - and had gotten on well with him.

Authorities first became aware of Vassall's alleged illegal activities after Burt's owner, Raymond Reid, a physical trainer from Bedford-Stuyvesant, told them that his terrier was left bleeding and only partially stitched on his front steps after botched abdominal surgery.

Seeking more proof, prosecutors recruited Fred, a street kitten, and set up the sting. They paid Vassall \$135 for a neutering. Vassall was arrested before he could put Fred under the knife.