



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



MICHAEL L. RAMSEY
District Attorney

FRANCISCO R. ZARATE
Chief Deputy District Attorney

RICHARD WEST
Chief Investigator

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
May 20, 2011

Rats Leads to Child Detention

Investigators from the Butte County District Attorney's Drug Endangered Children Program yesterday removed a 7-year-old boy from a home fouled by pet rats. The boy's mother and her boyfriend were arrested for child endangerment. The boy was turned over to child protection workers with the Butte County Children's Services Division who had accompanied the investigators on a search warrant service at the boy's Oro Dam Boulevard home in Oroville.

Tammy Alberta Norton, 39, and James Robert Knight, 41, both of Oroville were also arrested for possession of drug paraphernalia, specifically methamphetamine pipes. The child endangerment charges were based on the deplorable living conditions in the home which had pet rats roaming freely inside the home. Investigators said the home and particularly the child's bedroom reeked of urine and was littered with rat droppings. As investigators came into the bedroom one of the rats was on the boy's bed eating out of a plate of food the boy had just finished.

Additionally investigators found the methamphetamine pipes, baggies with methamphetamine residue and marijuana were within reach of the child. Moldy food and general filth was also found throughout the home.

Norton and Knight are being held at Butte County Jail on \$52,000 bail and are expected to be arraigned in court Monday.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey noted the raid was part of the county's newly enhanced Drug Endangered Children's Program. A federal grant sponsored by U.S. Senator Diane Feinstein has allowed the hiring of an additional District Attorney investigator and for additional social worker time. The Drug Endangered Children's Program focuses on removing children from living environments in which their health and well-being are endangered by drugs or a drug lifestyle. The program, which has been adopted by police and social service agencies throughout the nation, was started in Butte County by the District Attorney's Office, the Butte Interagency Narcotics Task Force (BINTF) and the Children's Services Division of the Welfare Department.