Three dogs remain in the custody of the Scott County Animal Shelter while their alleged owners face criminal charges in Scott Superior Court.

According to the probable cause affidavits filed in the cases of George Helton, 28, and Rebecca G. Smith, 25, the three canines, all mixed breed boxers, were found by animal shelter staff "...to be emaciated and in poor health..." at the end of June. There was no food or water for any of the dogs, the document stated, and all were on separate chains around the West York Road home of Helton and Smith.

Because of the dogs' apparent condition and because temperatures were reaching into the 90s and above, all of the animals were removed and taken to the shelter in Scottsburg.

All of them were taken to St. Clair Veterinary Clinic for evaluation. The two females were found to weigh around 26 pounds while the male was 38 pounds. According to court records, Helton and Smith called the veterinary clinic and said the dogs had a placenta disease which did not allow them to gain weight, but neither was able to provide medical evidence to support that statement. Another veterinarian from Southern Indiana Equine said dogs with such a condition can gain weight. That vet also reportedly said staff there had not seen the dogs since 2009.

An examination by a staff member of the Indiana State Board of Animal Health rated the two females as emaciated and the male as thin. On a 1 to 10 scale, the females had been rated a 1.0 and 1.5; the male was listed as a 3.

The affidavit also stated that Helton and Smith had come to the animal shelter on June 28, three days after the dogs had been removed, and wanted to know if they could reclaim the animals. A statement alleged to have been made by Helton at the time to a staff member related that the couple "...can't afford to feed the dogs the expensive food they need like everybody else."

A further review of the dogs' condition came on July 6 at the St. Clair clinic. In the re-evaluation, all of the dogs had gained weight. One of the females weighed 37 pounds, the second 34.2 pounds, and the male weighed 47.41 pounds.

Warrants were issued on July 20 for Helton and Smith based on the probable cause affidavit. Each is charged with three counts of abandonment or neglect of vetebrate animals, a Class A misdemeanor.

Both were scheduled to have initial court hearings either late Monday afternoon, July 23, or on Tuesday, July 24, before Judge Marsha Owens Howser.

Their individual bonds are set at $10,000 corporate surety/10% cash.