

## Mesa fire official arrested in bestiality case

### Credit: The Arizona Republic

Mar. 6, 2006 06:30 PM

Leroy Donald Johnson was caught this weekend in a barn with his pants down, literally, according to a sheriff's office report.

"You caught me{ellipsis}. I tried to (expletive) your sheep," Johnson told his neighbor, according to the report. But the Mesa Fire Department deputy fire chief changed his story when a sheriff's deputy arrived on his doorstep minutes later, denying anything happened. advertisement

Johnson, 52, was jailed on suspicion of disorderly conduct and criminal trespassing after the neighbor told investigators he found Johnson, unzipped and holding a sheep down on its side.

That's the sanitized version. The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office report released Monday night is a little more graphic.

Johnson's neighbor told sheriff's deputies he was called home Saturday afternoon when his 13-year-old daughter saw Johnson drag one of their sheep into a barn.

The teenager said Johnson had first knocked on the front and back door of the home in the 1200 block of East Catclaw Street, in a county island in Gilbert, before grabbing the small gray lamb, records showed.

One of the deputies noted that Johnson had bloodshot eyes and smelled of alcohol, and neighbors who confronted him said he admitted everything.

According to the deputy's report, "(The owner) took me into the back yard and showed me where he and (neighbor) pulled up. He took me through the corral gate and I saw the victim for the first time. She was a small gray lamb about three feet tall and four feet long."

The men then told the deputy they walked over to the small barn, opened the door and "saw Leroy holding the lamb down on its side in the hay with his pants down trying to have sex with it. That's when he made the statement about (expletive) the lamb."

The men said Johnson stood up and zipped up his pants.

"The sheep ran out of the barn at that point," the report says.

Johnson apologized, according to the report, and said he'd had "too much to drink."

The Mesa Fire Department placed Johnson, on paid leave Monday pending an internal investigation. Johnson, deputy chief of technical services, has been with the Mesa Fire Department for nearly 26 years.

Assistant Fire Chief Mary Cameli said Johnson has been an "exemplary" employee with a spotless personnel record.

"We were all very surprised by this," Cameli added.

Johnson did not return a call for comment Monday.

When confronted by a deputy at his home, Johnson initially denied the incident, saying he had been at his neighbor's house to talk about annexation.

Johnson said he went into the barn after hearing noises. The deputy said to him, "I believe something more than that happened," and offered help.

Johnson responded, "I probably do need some help, but I don't know if this is the time or place for it," according to the report.

When asked how the animal got into the barn, Johnson said, "I'm not going there," then asked if he was going to be arrested and demanded to know his legal options.

He continued to deny that anything happened in the barn and was arrested.

"I think it's disgusting," Sheriff Joe Arpaio said. "I think of Ghandi who said you judge the morality of a country by the way they treat their animals. . . . I do look at (bestiality) as some type of animal cruelty."