



1/8/25 Media Release

Deputies Catch Two Cannabis Farm Thieves

Penn Valley, CA – In the early morning hours of Jan. 8, the Sheriff's Nevada County Regional Dispatch Center received a 911 call with a report of four masked prowlers (later determined to be five) accessing the caller's property in the area of Flying T Rd. in Penn Valley.

Several Nevada County Sheriff's Office (NCSO) deputies immediately responded. While in route, the masked suspects reportedly jumped a fence to access more properties. Deputies canvassed the area and located four of the five subjects carrying four large totes, later determined to be filled with stolen cannabis.

The suspects dumped the cannabis and fled on foot, but deputies gave great chase. One suspect was immediately apprehended without incident. K9 Riggs tracked the scent of another suspect through thick underbrush, locating him approximately 150 yards up a hill, at which point the suspect surrendered. No one was injured in this process.

The two apprehended suspects were identified as Willie Andrew Benjamin Jr., 18, of Rancho Cordova, and Richard Angelo Ortiz, 20, of El Verta. Both were arrested and booked into Wayne Brown Correctional Facility for possession of stolen property - 496 PC; conspiracy to commit crime - 182 PC; prowling – 647(h) PC; and resisting arrest - 148(A)(1) PC.

Deputies continued searching for the remaining suspects throughout the early morning hours, calling in support from Grass Valley Police Department and the California Highway Patrol, but no further suspects were located. The search for the remaining suspects remains ongoing.

The stolen totes did not have any identifying information for the owner(s) and the original reporting party confirmed the totes did not belong to him. Individuals who believe they may have been the victim of this cannabis theft crime or who have information regarding this incident are encouraged to call the Sheriff's Special Investigation Unit at 530-265-1471.

#