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# TRAINER FACES 6 COUNTS OF HORSE ABUSE.

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Byline: Michael Coit Daily News Staff Writer

Tom Valter's hopes of competing in the Summer Olympics could be dashed by criminal charges that the former Agoura equestrian trainer abused two horses under his care.

Mary Anne Hogan was fired from her court reporting job after she was charged with taking one of the horses from the Agoura stables where Valter worked in what she described as an animal rescue.

The [Los Angeles](#) County prosecutor in both cases said Valter, a trainer at a Los Angeles riding club, was charged with six counts of animal cruelty following an investigation prompted by Hogan's arrest in August. Valter also is charged with two counts of dissuading witnesses by force or threat.

Valter was arrested at his [Santa Monica](#) home Friday and pleaded not guilty in Malibu Municipal Court on Monday. He faces three charges of whipping the horse Zoolog and a charge of using a [cattle prod](#) on the animal. He also is accused of whipping and injuring the horse Dominique and injuring the animal. Prosecutors say the incidents occurred at C.T. Farms in rural Agoura between March and September of last year.

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"The charges are meritless. People have lied about what happened," said Michael Artan, Valter's defense attorney.

Based on the charges, however, Judge [Lawrence Mira](#) has prohibited Valter from riding Dominique while the trainer is out on bail of \$130,000 awaiting a preliminary hearing.

Artan said he will argue at a hearing today that Valter should be allowed to ride the horse because the pair are entered in an Olympic-qualifying event at Paddock Riding Club this weekend.

Valter, a resident trainer employed at the club next to [Griffith Park](#) in Los Angeles, competes in [dressage](#), which is a gymnastic training event for horses. The weekend competition is one of 10 across the [United States](#) at which horses accumulate points leading to the Olympic selection event in June, said David Schmutz, owner and manager of Paddock.

"I've never seen him get after a horse," Schmutz said. "I know those horses. There's never been a problem.

"Tom Valter is not a horse abuser," Schmutz said. "We are 100 percent behind Tom. I think that these charges are outrageous."

Hogan contends that the felony charges filed against Valter validate her claims that he abused the two horses. Hogan trained her horse Magic in dressage at the C.T. Farms

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stables for three years.

"I'm feeling encouraged. I will feel vindicated when he is convicted," Hogan said.

Last month Hogan pleaded no contest to misdemeanor trespassing at C.T. Farms early on a Saturday morning in August and taking Zoolog away in a [horse trailer](#). Zoolog, who was owned by a [Las Vegas](#) woman at the time, has since been sold to an Agoura equestrian.

Hogan says she does not regret the act, though she said it cost her a good job with a court reporting agency.

"I realized that it was a radical act," she said. "There was no other action to take. This horse was in such critical danger."

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