

Man charged in flamingo's death has died

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A man who drew the anger of animal rights advocates after he was accused of causing the death of a beloved Busch Gardens flamingo has died.

Joseph Corrao, 48, was killed June 5 when he was struck by a pickup truck while crossing a busy road near his home near Orlando, according to the Florida Highway Patrol. A crash report says Corrao was walking north across State



Joseph Corrao

Road 50, near Story Partin Road in Orange County, shortly before 6 a.m. A Ford F-150 pickup was heading east and hit him. Rescue personnel took Corrao to Florida Hospital East, where he died.

The truck driver, who was uninjured, was not cited. An

investigation of the collision is continuing.

The crash occurred about two months before Corrao was set to go to trial on an animal cruelty charge. He gained notoriety in August 2016 after he was accused in the death of Pinky. The flamingo delighted Busch Gardens patrons with its dance moves and served as one of the theme park's animal ambassadors.

Corrao was visiting the park with his mother and daughters when he grabbed Pinky from an animal pen, police said. He then slammed the bird to the ground.

Pinky was badly injured, one of her legs nearly severed. Corrao later told police he was just trying to show off to his daughter. He said he didn't mean to injure the bird, police said, and apologized when he learned she had to be euthanized.

He was jailed for five days and later released on bail.

Word of Pinky's demise enraged animal lovers, who cre-



ated online petitions calling for harsher penalties for animal abusers and demanding "Justice for Pinky."

As Corrao's case moved through court, his public defender raised concerns about his mental health. A judge ordered two psychologists to examine him.

One found that Corrao suffered from a combination of post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, according to court documents. The other agreed with the schizophrenia diagnosis. Both

said he was incompetent to proceed toward trial.

In hearing on the matter, a judge was told that Corrao's condition rose to the level of a disability and that he lived on Social Security payments.

The judge ordered Corrao to undergo in-home competency restoration training, to avoid drinking alcohol, and to continue taking his prescribed medication. The case later moved into Hillsborough County's mental health court, where a judge received periodic updates on Corrao's treatment.

The prosecution began moving again in March after Corrao was declared competent. A trial date was set for August.

Corrao's family declined to talk to a reporter after his death.

Last week, prosecutors filed a formal notice that they had dropped the criminal charge upon learning of his death.

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