

Press Release: For Immediate Release
Animal Rescue League of NH
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August 23, 2007

Is Animal Hoarding on the Rise in New Hampshire?

Four Hoarding Homes Assisted by the Animal Rescue League of NH in the Past Month

This summer has been extremely busy for shelters across the state, especially when it comes to cat numbers and the Animal Rescue League of NH is no different. Litter after litter of kittens is being surrendered to the shelter as well as adult cats. In addition to people surrendering animals to the League, our Animal Cruelty Investigator, Maureen Prendergast is receiving calls on a daily basis of potential cruelty or hoarding situations. On Monday and Tuesday, August 20th and 21st, Ms. Prendergast worked with a Manchester family to remove 56 cats from their apartment on the West Side of town. When they originally called for assistance, they believed that they only had about 25 cats that they needed to re-home. The call was made because they were being evicted from their home that very day. Of the cats that were brought in, all have upper respiratory infections, ear mites and at least 5 are pregnant, which means that the League is now preparing to receive another 25 or more cats from this one hoarding situation.

Two weeks ago we received a call from a woman in Campton, NH whose elderly parent had 26 cats and was being moved into senior housing. She was having difficulty finding placements for her cats and did a search online to find a willing shelter. She located and contacted the Animal Rescue League of NH and Ms. Prendergast, who agreed to help. From this surrender, the League received 14 cats and was able to place the rest at other NH shelters.

A few weeks ago, Ms. Prendergast received a call about a home in Hooksett. The owners needed assistance with their cats which had bred too quickly and the numbers had rapidly gotten out of hand. At that point the League took in 14 flea-infested kittens and assisted the family by having a willing veterinarian alter and vaccinate the remaining 5 cats that were left in the house. The family financially did what they could to help, but it wasn't much and the League took on the expense through a special program called Multi-Animal Homes in Need of Assistance which was originally founded by a grant from PetSmart Charities.

In July, the League rescued 24 cats and kittens out of another Manchester home. These cats were infested with fleas and within a week, 5 of them gave birth to a litter of 5 kittens each, bringing the rescue number up from 24 to 49.

What is hoarding, many people ask? The following criteria are used to define animal hoarding:

- More than the typical number of companion animals
- Inability to provide even minimal standards of nutrition, sanitation, shelter, and veterinary care, with this neglect often resulting in starvation, illness, and death
- Denial of the inability to provide this minimum care and the impact of that failure on the animals, the household, and human occupants of the dwelling

Source: Tufts University - Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium.

When asked if she thinks that multiple animal homes are on the rise and, if so, why, Ms. Prendergast said, “Yes, I do think that animal hoarding is on the rise. I believe there are several factors contributing to the recent surge of cat overpopulation in shelters, including civil-minded citizens that are reporting neighbors, friends or family who have taken on more than they can handle and also by having an Animal Cruelty Investigation Outreach Program that can efficiently follow up on calls made to the shelter. The other factor would be the lack of accessibility to affordable animal healthcare such as low-cost spays and neuters for many of these folks. The League is responding to this need by offering low-cost spay/neuter clinics that are staffed by participating veterinarians and initially funded by the MAHINOA (Multiple Animals In Need of Assistance) grant that was made to the League by PetSmart Charities.”

For more information on animal cruelty and hoarding, go to www.rescueleague.org/investigations.cfm. To report a suspected cruelty or hoarding situation call the League at (603) 471-0888. If it is an emergency, call your local police department right away.

About the ARL NH: The Animal Rescue League of New Hampshire is a community resource dedicated to saving the lives of homeless pets, caring for companion animals afflicted by neglect, abandonment and cruelty and enhancing the relationship between people and pets through adoption, education, compassion and the promotion of animal welfare. The ARL NH is open to all residents of New Hampshire, and actively serves the towns of Amherst, Auburn, Bedford, Brookline, Candia, Dunbarton, Frankestown, Goffstown, Hollis, Hooksett, Litchfield, Londonderry, Lyndeborough, Manchester, Merrimack, Milford, Mont Vernon, New Boston, Wilton, and Windham.