Humane Investigations:
Animal Hoarding & Collecting

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Introduction

- Background on Keith Streff
- Why are we here today
- Intent of presentation
Topics of Discussion:
Hoardng and Collecting
- Cruelty to Animals Statutes in MN
- Psychological Phenomena
- Building a Criminal Case
- Law Enforcement & Humane Agents
- Community & Media Response
- Available Resources

Cruelty to Animals
MN Statute 343, Cruelty to Animals Basics:
- Animals must have access to food, water, proper shelter, and exercise;
- Animals must not be tortured, abandoned, or treated in a cruel manner as to cause the animal harm;
- Animals may not be used for fighting; persons may not promote, engage, or act as a spectator at animal fights;
- As of August 1, 2002, MN became the 33rd state to make certain acts of animal cruelty a felony.
Animal Hoarding Defined

- 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

Illinois Law (510 ILCS 70/2.10); Public Health Reports article establishing this definition

Profile of an Animal Hoarder

Research of 54 cases examined by Dr. Gary Patronek, expert in animal hoarding, concluded:

- 76% of animal hoarders were female
- 46% were 60 years of age or older
- 50% lived in single person households
- 78% of homes inspected were “heavily cluttered and unsanitary”
- Animals involved included cats, dogs, farm animals, and birds
- Median number of animals being hoarded was 39
  (Four cases involved more than 100 animals)
- 80% had dead or dying animals found in the home
- Estimated 700 to 2,000 new cases of animal hoarding every year in the United States

Psychological Phenomena

Animal Hoarders and Collectors
- Clinical vs. Physical
- Greed vs. Martyr
- Criminal Intent vs. Culpable Negligence

Cruelty to Animals; Statutes

MN Statute 343.12, Duties of Police Officers

Upon application of any agent appointed by the federation or a county or district society, it shall be the duty of any sheriff or the agent’s deputy or any police officer to investigate any alleged violation of the law relative to cruelty to animals, and to arrest any person found violating those laws. It shall also be the duty of those officers to take possession of any animals in their respective jurisdictions which have been cruelly treated, and deliver the same to the proper officers of the county or district for custody and care.
Statutes Continued…

MN Statute 343.235, Disposition of Seized Animals

Subdivision 1. General Rule. Humane disposal…
Subdivision 2. Security. Person claiming interest in the animal…
Subdivision 3. Notice; Right to Hearing.
(a) The authority taking the animal must give notice by these methods:
   1. Description of the animal…
   2. Statement that person w/interest…
   3. Statement costs of care…
(b) Request of interest must be made within 10 days…
(c) Judge may authorize return of animal…
(d) Person claiming interest is liable for all costs…

Clutter contributed to deadly St. Paul house fire

Article by: KAREN ZAMORA, Star Tribune: March 22, 2015

A St. Paul woman died in a fire early Sunday…..

“She had a lot of personal property — some would call that hoarding — which made it more likely to have a fire because of all the combustible materials,” Zaccard said. “And it makes it more difficult to escape the fire, which may have been the case here…..”
Too much stuff: Minnesota cities confront hoarding
Star Tribune, September 29, 2013

Officials statewide are trying to resolve cases where extreme clutter is health and safety threat.

Faced with a steady and apparently rising stream of homes that are overflowing with garbage, filth and just plain stuff, Minnesota cities are marshaling resources against the threat to public health and safety.

- While some cases grab headlines — such as the duplex in northeast Minneapolis that was razed last year after dead cats, animal feces and rotting garbage were found inside — more typical are homes that look perfectly normal from the street but are filled with clutter.

Building an Animal Cruelty Case

- Definitions
- Crime Scene Evidence
- Forensic Pathology Evidence
- Collaboration between Law Enforcement, Veterinarians and Humane Agents
Definitions

- Forensic: pertaining to a court of law
- Pathology: the science of the origin, nature and course of diseases
- Forensic science: using medicine for court related proceedings

Prove It!

Cases are built on:

- Anti-cruelty laws
- Collection of crime scene evidence
  - Photographs
  - Statements
  - Eye witnesses
  - Paraphernalia
- Collection of forensic pathology evidence
  - Veterinary reports, findings
  - Test results, x-rays, case history, etc.
Hoardings & Collecting Cases

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Hoardings & Collecting Cases

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Investigations

Role of the Humane Agent

- Determine facts
- Determine source of complaint
- Determine legal status
  - Work with local law enforcement agency
  - Work with city, county, district attorneys
- Exercise conflict resolution

Forensic Evidence

- How the animal died
- Where the animal died
- When the animal died
- Observed injuries before or after death
- Clues supporting who killed the animal
- Extent to which animal suffered prior to death
Crime Scene Evidence

Some criminal cases are easy to establish because of the evidence collected…

Law Enforcement & Humane Agents

- Police officers are required by law to deliver an animal to an appropriate shelter if it is found to be treated cruelly (animal is without proper shelter, water, food); Police officers are required to investigate and arrest anyone found in violation of laws pertaining to animal cruelty/welfare; a Police officer may be required to testify in a court of law about an investigation

- Humane Agents work with local law enforcement to procure search and seizure warrants; Humane officers do not have the authority to execute warrants without local law enforcement involvement

Get to know the Humane Agents assigned to the community in your jurisdiction – you never know when you will need to work with them!
Community & Media Response

Woman Faces Charges after Rabbits, Carcasses Found
Scott Goldberg, KARE11 News, August 2004

Rabbits -- both dead and alive -- were pulled from a Twin Cities home Monday afternoon.

The woman who lives there faces possible criminal charges for hoarding animals, after 50 rabbits and more than 100 rabbit carcasses were discovered after an anonymous tipster called police and complained of the smell.

"It's just a deplorable, unsanitary environment," humane society investigator Keith Streff said about the home in St. Anthony. "Just imagine what 100 some plus animals can do over a five year period of time and accumulate in feces and urine and other problem-related issues and that's what you have in that house."

In the 3300 block of Belden Drive, firefighters found cages holding the living rabbits. A van in the driveway was filled with the dead animals, each of which was labeled with the rabbit's name and date of death. Each one had been recovered from a freezer in the garage.

"It's unfortunate we can't prevent these people from getting animals back," Streff said, as he recalled his visit to the same home five years ago. In August 1999, in the same kind of freezer, authorities found more than 80 dead rabbits. More than 300 were found alive but living in filth.

Five years ago, the woman was not charged as a criminal, but many of her rabbits had to be destroyed. Some had the neurological Head Tilt disease, which is something investigators said they saw Monday, as well...
Rabbit Case, St. Anthony 2004

Bathroom

Refrigerator

Bodies collected for evidence

Body identified for evidence
Rabbit Case, St. Anthony 2004

Veterinarians examine rabbits

Available Resources

AHS has veterinarians, veterinarian technicians, animal care specialists, and humane officers available to assist your agency with an investigation and/or seizure upon request.
Questions & Answers

For additional information or resources, please contact me at:

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