

Hinsdale woman pleads not guilty in Keene to animal cruelty charge

By CHRIS GAROFOLO, Reformer Staff

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KEENE, N.H. -- A Hinsdale woman pleaded not guilty Thursday morning in Keene District Court after she was charged with two counts of cruelty to animals, according to the clerk's office.

Terri Mitchell, 42, was arrested March 4 after the Cheshire County Attorney's Office completed an investigation -- done in conjunction with the Monadnock Humane Society -- which found more than 40 cats and two sheep that were severely neglected.

She was released following her arraignment on personal recognizance. Mitchell will return to Keene District Court on June 25 for trial.

According to the police affidavit from Hinsdale Senior Patrolman Michael Bomba, the police were contacted by Mitchell's ex-husband, who had stopped by her Chesterfield Road house on Feb. 21.

The ex-husband reported it to be in extremely poor condition with between 20-25 cats living in the residence.

On the same day in February, Bomba contacted Stephanie Frommer, director of field services at the humane society, and the two lead a team to check on the property.

"Prior to entering the residence I could smell a strong odor of cat urine coming from inside the residence emanating out of the house," Bomba wrote in the affidavit.

Once entering the house, officials report the entire residence stank of cat urine and feces with three litter boxes more than half full.

"I did not observe any water source for the cats to drink. There were empty cat food bags everywhere in the kitchen area and some food on the floors in dishes and on empty cat food bags," according to the affidavit.

The patrol team also found the decomposed body of a cat under a chair on the rear porch. Another cat was missing its left eye and later was so sick with infection it had to be euthanized, Frommer told Bomba in the police report.

Upon searching the barn, Frommer found two sheep that had not been shorn for several years, adding weight that causes unnecessary stress on the animal's joints.

The animals were transported to the humane society, where many of them remain.

Monadnock Humane Society CEO Carol Armer said the animals were willingly turned over to their care, where they were spayed and neutered, given medical treatment and put up for adoption.

"We're very happy to have them here," said Armer. Roughly 15 cats have since been adopted.

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