

Rescue League Treating 14 Abandoned Cats

Cats, Kittens Found In Manchester Basement

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BEDFORD, N.H. -- Authorities are investigating what appears to be a case of animal neglect after the discovery of 14 cats and kittens abandoned in the basement of a Manchester home, authorities said.

The Animal Rescue League of New Hampshire said the discovery is evidence of a larger problem as pet owners look to offload their animals during a sluggish economy, leaving animals to suffer the consequences.

"We've been seeing a lot more of that lately. Typically, it's unusual," said Robin McCune, coordinator of events and community relations at the Animal Rescue League of New Hampshire.

The abandoned kittens suffer from respiratory and eye problems and are being treated at the league's Bedford facility along with the adult cats, WMUR News 9's Jean Mackin reported.

"When they came in, they were covered in fleas and they also had ear mites," McCune said. In all, 14 cats and kittens required extensive medical care, in addition to 225 animals who now call the league home, including a pit bull with a broken leg and a blind basset hound. The league said many pet owners can't afford to care for their pets anymore. Since January, the shelter has taken in 450 animals -- far outpacing its normal annual rate.

"We're just bracing for a really tough year at this point," McCune said.

Animal cruelty investigator Maureen Prendergast said the league is answering more calls for help from financially strapped pet owners.

"We've seen a huge increase in calls for spay and neutering assistance, people needing help getting vaccinations. We have a food pantry, (and people ask,) 'Do you have litter? I need some cat food to get by. I'm between paychecks.' We definitely are feeling the economy at this point," she said.

The kittens and cats need medical attention before they will be available for adoption in about a month. The league said it relies on volunteers and financial donations to help the animals get through the economic crisis.