



For immediate release

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St. Anthony cats humanely euthanized to protect population

Golden Valley, MN (February 16, 2009)—Due to a tragic case of animal hoarding, the Animal Humane Society made the decision to humanely euthanize 120 cats it recently took from a home in St. Anthony, Minn. Clinical diagnosis and medical testing provided evidence of multiple health issues within the group of cats. The issues included upper respiratory infection (URI), ringworm, the herpes virus, and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV).

“There is no question that we must respond and assist animals in these types of situations,” states Janelle Dixon, president and CEO of the Animal Humane Society. “Once in our care, we ask ourselves how we can aid animals while ensuring the best interests of all of the animals in our shelters. In addition, we need to examine the implications of placing these animals in homes with other animals. In the case of ringworm, which can be transmitted to people, that has even other implications. These are no doubt difficult decisions for our organization.”

The challenges these cats faced were insurmountable. URI, the herpes virus and ringworm are highly contagious. FIV is untreatable and a life-threatening illness for cats.

“It is bittersweet to remove animals from abusive and neglectful situations only to have to euthanize them,” states Kathie Johnson, veterinary services director for Animal Humane Society. “We always carefully consider the consequences of this decision. In this case, we determined that maintaining a population of 120 cats for the time it would take to resolve all of their issues would have put too many other animals’ lives at risk.”

Animal Humane Society also determined that this situation is a public health issue and if placed, it could potentially be putting animals into the community that could impact the health of other animals. The severity of the issues made this a situation in which it would not place the cats with other organizations for care.

Dixon understands the decision will be criticized by some. “We know it was the right decision for the animals in our care and now other animals will not be needlessly impacted or lose their lives.”

Many animals that come to the Animal Humane Society as a result of its humane investigations work have issues but do not endanger the other animals at its facilities and are ultimately placed. “In some situations, placement is not possible—we especially see this with large scale cat situations,” states Dixon.

(more)

These cats were victims of animal hoarding. They lived in a small home that became both their food bowl and litter box. “The people keeping these cats were emotionally attached and felt they were saving the cats when in fact every decision they made led to ending their lives,” says Animal Humane Society Humane Investigator Keith Streff. “It is our hope that a case like this demonstrates the seriousness of animal hoarding before situations like these become more acute.”

In 2008, the Animal Humane Society took in more than 38,000 animals. Currently, it has 180 cats just at its Golden Valley facility.

Photos of the cats on-site in St. Anthony are available.

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The Animal Humane Society is the leading animal welfare organization in the Upper Midwest dedicated to engaging and serving local and regional communities of people and animals. Through its comprehensive programs and services at its locations in Buffalo, Coon Rapids, Golden Valley, St. Paul and Woodbury, the Animal Humane Society provides resources that compassionately serve all the stages of an animal's life.

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