

Hundreds of Animals Rescued in Polk County

More than 70 dogs and 35 cats were found on an 80-acre property in Missouri.

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A recent rescue of nearly 400 animals from an 80-acre property in Polk County, Mo., is considered to be the largest rescue in the history of the Humane Society of Missouri.

The animals were assessed by humane investigators and representatives of the Polk County Sheriff's Department at the scene. A 26-person team from the humane society included veterinarians who provided treatment for the more than 70 dogs and 35 cats found throughout the property.

Many animals had poor skin and coat conditions and were underweight, investigators said. In addition to the dogs and cats, rescuers found severely matted rabbits and guinea pigs, 40 birds, 10 goats, 10 mice, six donkeys, six horses, one pig, and an unknown number of koi fish and goldfish.

Details about the property owners were not released, but a female was arrested and is in custody, according to the prosecuting attorney's office in Bolivar, Mo. Animal charges are expected but had not been made as of Monday. However, child endangerment charges were filed because children were involved in the case.

Horses and farm animals will be taken to the Humane Society of Missouri's Longmeadow Rescue Ranch in Union, Mo. Most of the other animals went to the Humane Society's headquarters in St. Louis, Mo. A Missouri fish hatchery is assisting Polk County law enforcement with the transport, housing and care for the exotic fish.

Tim Rickey, director of Rescues and Investigations for the local humane society said that people who purchase animals from owners of such operations "are being deceived" because the animals are not well cared for. "We will work closely with law enforcement to do everything in our power to ensure the owners will not be able to harm animals in this way again," Rickey said.

A custody hearing for the animals is scheduled at 9 a.m., Sept. 2 at the Polk County Courthouse in Bolivar.