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Lee woman says she's an animal lover: Says she'll fight to get her pets back

LEE — An area resident says she is "an animal lover" and the police are lying about the condition of the house and animals in relation to a potential animal cruelty case.

Last week, police said they removed nine animals from an Old Mill Road home in Lee after they believed the animals may have been in living in unsuitable conditions.

Three dogs, three cats, two birds and a ferret have been in the care of The New Hampshire Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NHSPCA) since they were taken out of the home. NHSPCA officials said the animals had varying ailments, including Lyme disease and flea infestation.

A dead turtle and the skeletal remains of a cat were found on the property as well, according to police.

The tenant of the home, Amie Nason, said she was in the process of moving out when her landlord unexpectedly served her an eviction notice. Nason said she has lived in the home for the majority of her life, but recent problems with the home and a wish to move to another town was causing her to look elsewhere.

She said she had recently refused to pay rent because the faucets in the house and a toilet were not working. She claims a water pipe under one of the sinks was broken and leaking underneath, causing mold issues. She said the landlord has refused to fix it, since the house was "so old" and they had made an agreement she would be moving out of the home.

When police arrived last week to help issue the eviction notice, they said they noticed three dogs were left outside the residence. Officers said they put the animals in the home before locking it for the night. They returned in the morning, saying they removed the animals from unsuitable conditions that included full litter boxes and animal feces on the beds.

The claim of full litter boxes is false, Nason said, adding the cat is an outdoor animal and there were no litter boxes in the house.

Nason said the animals were not left unattended for "several days," as police said was possibly the case. She had been at the house earlier in the day, but upon returning that night from looking at her new residence, they were locked out.

"We came back later that day seeing notes on the door saying an eviction was served and we couldn't get in," she said.

She said she could hear the dogs barking in the house, but were worried if they entered, they would be arrested for not following the police order to stay out. Nason said she called the phone number listed on the door and was told by police she would have to talk to the lawyer involved in the eviction case, which could take several days.

The inside of the house was a mess because the police officers had been moving things around when looking to see if there were any other animals in the home, she said. The pictures officers released were taken after they had "ripped through stuff" and moved things around.

She said the boxes and bags around the house were there because the tenants had been in the middle of moving. She said her 10-year-old daughter had not been living in the house for the last month because of the move and had been staying with family.

"The other thing was they were saying the dogs had gone to the bathroom in the house," she said. "They were there for hours. I'm sure they had to go to the bathroom. I'm absolutely sure they did go to the bathroom."

She said the dogs may have also rummaged through things while locked in the house, because they tend to "trash things" when left alone.

According to the NHSPCA, the dogs and cats are being treated for flea infestations. Medical tests on the three dogs have also come back positive for Lyme disease and anaplasmosis, another tick-borne disease.

As two of the three cats are newborns, NHSPCA staff have to be cautious of the amount of antibiotics they can give the kittens.

The ferret is eating regularly, but still underweight. The two birds are being treated with antibiotics, as NHSPCA staff said they are mite infested and overweight.

The animals were not all hers, and Nason claims she had taken many of them in after family and friends could no longer care for them.

Nason said she took in the ferret about a week before police locked down her house. She claims a neighbor had given her the animal because they could no longer care for it and would have had to kill it.

Two of the three dogs were not hers originally and Nason said she has already taken one of the dogs to the veterinarian for an eye issue, but couldn't pay the bill to get it fixed.

"They said nothing would come of it," she said, adding they would have taken care of the issue if they believed it was going to harm the animal.

She said the previous owner's child had hit the dog in the eye with a toy, and it had caused the issue. Nason has had the animal for about a year.

She said the only animal that she personally purchased and is hers is a poodle and shih tzu

mix.

Her response to the dead turtle is that her daughter had found it alive on the side of the street and had wanted to bring it home. They had put it in an aquarium with water, but Nason said her daughter had cleaned out the tank sometime before the eviction notice and had not put water back in the tank.

"That could be my fault," she said. "I should have been in there and checked upon it."

As for the dead cat in the backyard, Nason said she believes it was her cat who had run away and hadn't been seen for days. She believes the animal died of old age.

Nason said police are expecting her to sign over the remaining animals to the NHSPCA, but she intends to fight any potential claims of animal abuse.

"Asking me to sign over my dogs is like asking me to sign over my kids," she said. "I'm not going to do it."

Her new residence, which Nason did not say where it is located, can have animals, she said.

"My whole thing is we are people who love animals," she said. "And the whole thing put us out there to be completely not who we are."

Lee police said they are continuing their investigation before determining if there will be any potential charges for animal cruelty. If someone is found guilty of acts of animal cruelty, they could be barred from owning pets for up to five years.
