

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – April 25, 2017



Vermont Humane Federation

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www.vermonthumane.org

Addison County Humane Society ♦ American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ♦ Best Friends Animal Society
Central Vermont Humane Society ♦ Feline & Friends Foundation ♦ Good Karma Rescue ♦ Green Mountain Animal Defenders
The Hooved Animal Sanctuary ♦ Humane Society of Chittenden County ♦ The Humane Society of the United States
Lucy Mackenzie Humane Society ♦ North Country Animal League ♦ PETS of the Kingdom ♦ Protect Our Wildlife ♦ Riverside
Rescue, Inc. Rutland County Humane Society ♦ Second Chance Animal Center ♦ Springfield Humane Society
Spay ASAP ♦ Vermont Companion Animal Neutering, Inc. ♦ Windham County Humane Society

Vermont Humane Federation Responds to Dropped Animal Cruelty Charges in Eden Case

Members of the Vermont Humane Federation (VHF) were sickened to learn that all eight felony counts of aggravated cruelty to animals against Carol Merchant, the owner of an Eden property raided in February, 2015 by the Vermont State Police, were dropped without prejudice by presiding Judge Carlson. Members of the VHF, including The Humane Society of Chittenden County (HSCC), the Central Vermont Humane Society (CVHS), the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the North County Animal League (NCAL) and Spring Hill Horse Rescue (SHHR) assisted with the rescue and removal of 78 dogs, 3 cats and 1 duck from the property voluntarily relinquished by Ms. Merchant on the day the search warrant was served and during the following three days. Rescuers found animals living in squalor in stacked cages inside the home in varying degrees of neglect. Initial veterinary assessments showed animals with severe matting, eye infections, rotten teeth, hair loss, fleas, overgrown nails, urine scalds, starvation and dehydration.

The case originated from complaints from an informant who had witnessed conditions inside the home firsthand. Ms. Merchant held a license as a pet dealer from the town of Eden and professed to be a 501(c)3 looking for adoptive homes for the animals, even though some of them had reportedly been in her care for years.

“We understand that the wheels of justice turn slowly,” said VHF board member and Humane Society of Chittenden County CEO and director Nancy Cathcart, “but in this case justice was certainly not served. Besides the enormous financial burden that a case of this magnitude takes on Vermont’s private, non-profit animal shelters and rescue groups, there is a long-term

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emotional toll to the animals, and to their rescuers. Dismissing these charges without prejudice is like wiping the slate clean of any responsibility for the abhorrent conditions in which most of these animals were forced to live day in and day out.”

Central Vermont Humane Society was the lead agency and each animal was relinquished to their ownership. The Humane Society of Chittenden County found a heated warehouse and used the services of the Vermont Disaster Animal Response Team for the kennels and emergency supplies. A team of humane investigators and vets volunteered their time to document each animal’s weight, condition and injuries. Dozens of regional volunteers assisted in their care and feeding. Over the course of four days, eight humane societies and rescue groups from Vermont and New Hampshire took ownership of the rescued animals and with the exception of three dogs that had to be euthanized because of the severity of their condition, all remaining animals found new permanent homes.

The medical bills for the care of these animals exceeded \$20,000, funded through the donations from 622 donors via a GoFundMe page.