



Hoarding & Large Scale Impounds

Lee County Domestic Animal Services

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Hoarding Defined

- Compulsive acquiring or difficulty discarding objects most others would consider useless or of limited value.
- Clutter so severe it prevents or seriously limits use of living spaces for their intended purposes.
- Clutter due to the acquiring or difficulty discarding that leads to significant impairment or distress.

Compulsion to Acquire or Difficulty Discarding

- Can't stop acquiring
- Different from collecting, inventory, fad
- Different from saving treasured mementos and possessions
- Items by most people's standards that do not have value
- Hoarders see a potential value
- Hoarders claim that discarding items they perceive to have value would be wasteful
- Hoarders attribute special meaning to objects as mundane as styro-foam cups and plastic containers

Clutter Prevents or Seriously Hinders Using Living Spaces for Their Intended Purposes



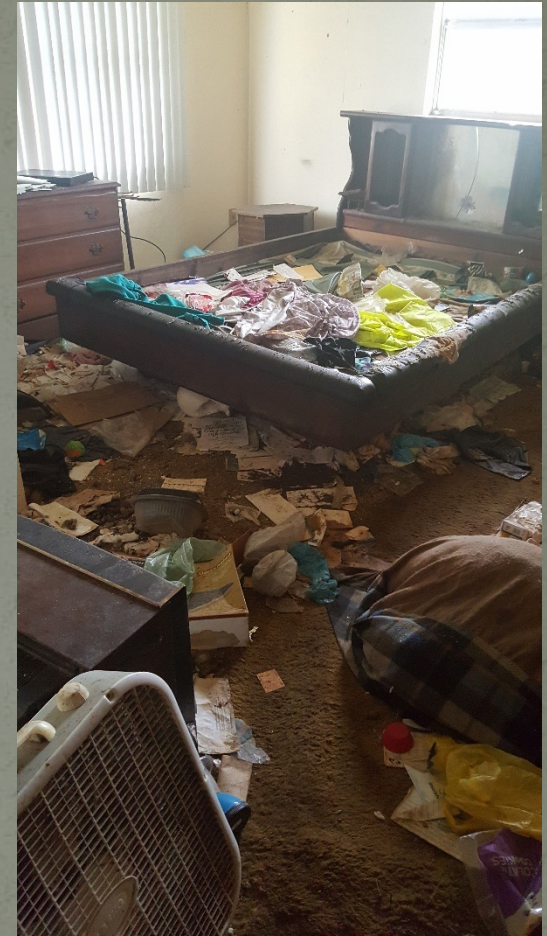
Inability to cook or enjoy meals at a table because appliances and kitchen are blocked.



There is no clear surface or space to relax or entertain guests.
Person may not even be able to get into their own bed.



Clutter Causes Significant Impairment or Distress



Quality of life begins to suffer severely

Emotional distress is apparent.



However, distress depends on the level of insight. Where there is low insight the hoarder may not show personal distress at first. There is almost always distress in the family or community system which becomes distressful for the hoarder.

Hoarding vs. Collecting: Three Defining Attributes

- Perception of value
- Ability to maintain functionality in living spaces
- Expression of pride in one's possessions.



Distinguishing Between Collectors and Hoarders

Collectors	Hoarders
Take pride in their collections.	May be embarrassed by their possessions.
Organize and care for their collections.	Have homes cluttered with disorganized possessions.
Enjoy showing others their collections.	Avoid letting people see their homes and possessions.
May budget for collection expenses.	Often go into debt with compulsive buying.
Take pleasure in acquiring new items.	May feel depressed and ashamed when they need to add to their possessions.
Usually choose items that are also of value or interest to others.	Acquire and keep things that no one else would be interested in, such a junk mail.

Source: Adapted from *Overcoming Compulsive Hoarding*, by Fugen Neziroglu, Ph.D. Jerome Bubrick, Ph.D., and Jose A. Yaryura-Tobias, M.D. (New harbinger, 2004).

Animal Hoarding

- Failure to provide minimum standards of space, sanitation, nutrition, and veterinary care for animals.
- The inability to recognize the effect this failure has on the welfare of the animals, humans in the household, and the environment.
- Obsessive attempts to accumulate or collect animals in face of deteriorating conditions.
- Denial or minimization of problems and living conditions. Conditions can lead to fire hazards, tripping hazards and health code violations.
- Emotionally connected to items that remind them of happier times or represent beloved people or pets.

The lack of functional living space, can prevent them from performing important daily tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, sleeping and bathing



Types of Animal Hoarders



The Overwhelmed Caregiver



The Overwhelmed Caregiver

- Exhibit some awareness of problems, more reality-based than other types
- Problem is triggered by a change in circumstances or resources (social, economic, medical, loss of spouse, etc.)
- Makes an initial effort to provide proper care but eventually gets overwhelmed; is unable to resolve problems effectively
- Experiences a gradual decline in their ability to care for their animals
- Has a strong attachment to animals as family members
- Finds attachment to animals a bigger issue than control; may let animal control or humane officials help out of concern for animal welfare

The Overwhelmed Caregiver

- Tends to minimize rather than deny problems
- Tends to be withdrawn and isolated
- Allows intervener to gain entry, more likely to respect system and comply with recommendations
- They are less deliberately secretive; acquire animals passively
- Has self-esteem linked to role as caregiver
- May need guardianship in many cases

The Rescue Hoarder



The Rescue Hoarder

- Has a strong sense of mission to save animals which leads to unavoidable compulsion
- Fears death of animals and opposes euthanasia
- Starts with adequate resources for animal care
- Acquires animals actively rather than passively
- Believes they are the only one who can provide adequate care; initially begin with a rescue to adopt pattern which is replaced by a rescue-only pattern
- Numbers of animals eventually overwhelm capacity to provide even minimal care

The Rescue Hoarder

- Finds it hard to refuse requests to take even more animals
- Avoids authorities and/or impedes their access
- Is not necessarily socially isolated; may work with an extensive network of enablers and be more engaged in society, therefore less amenable to intervention via social services

The Exploiter Hoarder



28 Maltese dogs found living in deplorable conditions in Lehigh Acres



Police arrested a Lehigh Acres woman for hoarding dogs and feeding feral cats



Exploiter Hoarders

- Most difficult and problematic type
- Actively acquires animals purely to serve own needs
- Has sociopathic characteristics
- Lacks empathy for animals and people; indifferent to harm caused to animals or people
- Extreme denial of the situation is common
- Rejects authority or any outsider's legitimate concern over animal care
- Believes their knowledge is superior to all others; adopts the role of expert with extreme need to control



Health Concerns

- The environment created by the hoarding of animals presents many health hazards.
- The accumulation of animal excrement can create hazardous fumes and destroy the cilia in the human lungs.



Hoarded animals are often kept in various states of decay--with live animals living among (and sometimes feeding on) the remains of dead animals.



Health Concerns contd.

Numerous zoonotic diseases may be present

- Hanta virus from rat excrement
- Leptospirosis from animal urine
- Ringworm
- Cat scratch fever
- Toxoplasmosis which can cause birth defects
- Rabies



Health Concerns contd.

- It is important to secure a fresh air supply; however, in some cases a mask may be sufficient.
- Hazardous material suits and gloves are a must
- Wear secure footwear, surfaces inside and outside residences are typically unstable.



How do you report possible Animal Hoarding and Neglect?

- Contact your animal control agency or Law Enforcement Officials.
- Ensure the information you are providing is accurate. Provide address, landmarks, intersections, etc.
- If possible, provide pictures and detail of the conditions you are reporting.



LEE COUNTY DOMESTIC ANIMAL SERVICES

Field Animal Hoarding Protocol

The Field Animal Hoarding Protocol is to be used as a guideline when responding to cases of animal hoarding.

Complaint

- Determine person's name, address, animal species and estimated number of animals at the property location.
- Relay information to dispatch.

Dispatch

- An activity will be created and assigned to the Animal Control Officer (ACO).
- The ACO will read, review and research the information prior to arrival in all databases (Chameleon, arrest history, property appraisers office, etc).
- The ACO will respond to the location and conduct a preliminary investigation.

Initial Investigation

- Photograph property from all angles (wide, close-up, and street view)
- Note if windows are open or closed
- Note if any animals are seen or heard inside or outside of the residence
- Note the presence of clutter or trash outside and/or inside the property, including overgrown grass or shrubs, and the presence of food and/or water bowls
- Note the presence of any strong odor, such as ammonia or feces. Use instruments if available to identify hazards, both inside and outside of the residence (Ammonia Meters, heat thermometer, etc.)

Establishing First Contact

- Establish respectful and professional contact with the homeowner and advise them of the reason(s) for your visit.
- Collect any information provided in an objective manner and request to see the animals after this information is collected. If the owner declines, please state this in your report.
- Identify what species, ages (or age ranges) and numbers of animals that are being housed on the property if the owner provides this information. State this information in your report.
- Request to see the animals. If the owner declines, and you suspect that there is a hoarding concern, ensure that all information gathered is entered into Chameleon and create a follow-up sequence for a Senior ACO (SACO). Depending on agencies hierarchy, Supervisor/Investigator, etc.
- Relay information gathered to the Field Manager, Field Supervisor and SACO primarily in charge of hoarding cases.

Prior to SACO Investigation

- Ensure vehicle(s) are stocked with the following supplies: PPE suits, masks, gloves, transfer cages, alcohol, hand sanitizer, flea spray, tape, trash bags, cat tongs, cat nets, leashes, control poles, muzzles and a Multiple Owner Surrender Form.
- SACO will communicate with Field Manager, Field Supervisor, Kennel Supervisors, Clinic Supervisor, Clinic Operations Manager and the Veterinarians that an investigation is anticipated.

SACO Investigation

- Respond to the property location and investigate the allegations.
- Once granted entry into the residence, evaluate and note household conditions and a best approximation of number and species of animals. If all animals can be handled and examined, an accurate number of animals is needed. Clear photographs of the environmental conditions and multiple views of animals involved are necessary.
- Based on the environmental conditions and health conditions of the animals, determine if all animals require immediate removal or if several visits can be planned for slower removal.
- If the owner is uncooperative, local law enforcement should be contacted for assistance when possible.
- Explain to the owner the Multiple Animal Owner Surrender Form. If the owner understands and completes the form in full, ensure that a second staff member serve as a witness.
- IF the owner refuses to cooperate and the environmental and/or medical conditions of the animals reflect severe neglect, move forward with a Law Enforcement impound.

Animal Impoundment

- SACO will communicate with the Field Manager and Supervisor to determine the number of staff, equipment and vehicles needed for safe removal of animals.
- Staff will be designated as follows:
- The ACO or SACO in charge of the investigation will designate staff as needed and communicate with on-site and off-site staff.
- A staff member will utilize a designated camera or county phone for all photographs of the environment and each animal to include at least 4 views (right and left sides, front and back). Animals photographed must be matched with an animal identification number.
- Staff will work in pairs wearing proper PPE to safely trap and remove animals and transfer them to the staff outside for placement in vehicles.
- The removed animals will be placed in a designated vehicle for transport to the shelter. At this time, the staff transporting the animals will contact the Kennel Supervisor with an estimated time of arrival to the clinic. The Kennel Supervisor will immediately notify clinic staff. Do not unload animals until clinic staff has given permission to do so.
- Upon arrival at the shelter, assign a staff member to create animal IDs and input animal data in Chameleon with veterinary staff supervision.
- A final sweep of the house and property will be conducted prior to leaving to ensure all animals have been removed.
- Upon return to the shelter, the ACO/SACO in charge of the investigation will contact the veterinary staff to ensure that all documentation of sick and/or injured animals are made, in order to determine what potential charges may occur and will remain in communication with the Veterinarians until the case is resolved. The Kennel Supervisor, with veterinary staff collaboration, will determine the outcomes of the animals.
- All hoarding cases will have a follow-up by the investigating ACO or SACO.



**ATTACHMENT "A" TO OWNER SURRENDER RELEASE FORM
ADDITIONAL PET INFORMATION FOR MULTIPLE PET SURRENDER**



Pet Name	Breed	Color	Age	Sex	Location on Property	Comment	Animal ID (to be completed by staff)



Owner's Signature

Date

Co-Owner's Signature

Date

FOR STAFF USE ONLY-Name Staff Witness: _____

Animal Intake & Inventory – Large Scale Impounds

For large scale hoarding situations, the intake and inventory system will differ from that of general Animal Intake/ Inventory Process.

Large scale hoarding situations will likely include a variety of feral and friendly animals, and given the nature of the environment, capture of even friendly animals can be a challenge. For that reason, animals should be secured into crates/ carriers/ cages as quickly as possible after capture.

The following document outlines the process for tagging animals and keeping accurate inventory of each when removing them from a large scale hoarding case. This evidentiary data will be reviewed by investigators, law enforcement, lawyers and other key players.

Animal Intake & Inventory – Large Scale Impounds

Materials Needed:

Animal Identification

- Crate/ Cage Labeling
- Collars and ID tags

Triage Markers for medical or behavior concerns

- Flagging Tape

Inventory Documentation

- ID Photo
- Case-board (Dry erase board)
- Inventory Log

Animal Intake & Inventory – Large Scale Impounds

Animal Identification – Crate/ Cage Labeling

REMEMBER: For safety reasons in large scale impound situations, animals should be secured in crates/ carriers/ cages, etc. immediately after capture. Even a friendly animal can become stressed quickly in this environment and will do anything escape.

- Using duct tape, colored tape or heavy duty stickers and permanent marker, pre-label the front and right side of the crate/ cage with ID numbers. The number on the crate/ carrier will become the temporary ID number of the animal that is secured.*
- If dealing with a multi- room situation or large property, it becomes important to identify which room or area of the property the animal originated from. Place a corresponding tag which will identify the room or area in which the animal was captured.*

Date: 01/01/2023

Case #: A23-111222

Location: Room #1 or NW end of property

Animal ID: 1122

Animal Intake & Inventory – Large Scale Impounds

Inventory Documentation – Inventory Log

An Inventory Log will be the final documentation of every animal removed from the scene. This form should include the following information:

- Animal ID number
- Breed/ Species
- Color
- Gender
- Age
- Number of young associated with the animal (if applicable)
- Any relevant comments about the animal

Identifying Cruelty and Neglect

What are the elements to Cruelty / Neglect ?



Poor body condition and noticeable trauma

- Veterinary care
- Food and water
- Adequate Shelter
- Intentional harm



Cruelty defined in Florida State Statute 828;

Every act, omission, or neglect whereby unnecessary or unjustifiable pain or suffering is caused, except when done in the interest of medical science, permitted, or allowed to continue when there is reasonable remedy or relief



The Investigation

Determine the scope for gathering intelligence

Who is the possible owner/ caretaker? What animals and violations are present?

Attempt to establish a rapport

- Complainant
- Owner, Caretaker, Residents inside the home

Evidence collection

- Owner History
- Witness Statements/ Contact Information
- Photographs / Videos
- Medical Documentation

Charging documents

- Warning
- State statute (Arrest, Notice to appear)
- Local civil ordinance violations (Fine, court date)

Neglect Template

- Who owns the property (Property Appraiser)?
- Are there previous calls in Chameleon (CAD System) at this address?
- Who owns the animal(s)?
- Has the owner ever been charged by the agency before?
- How many animals involved?
- What is/are the condition of the animals?
- Are any animals in imminent distress?
- What are the allegations?
- What did you observe?
- When did you observe this?
- Are the allegations substantiated?
- Does this incident appear to warrant FSS charges?
- Who did you speak with?
- Were neighbors/witnesses spoken to?
- Have you obtained all phone numbers/addresses of those involved?
- Are pictures attached to the incident?
- Has this been re-sequenced?
- If not re-sequenced why not?

High level legal process expectations for an animal seizure resulting from cruelty and neglect

Have knowledge of your agency's policies and protocols regarding a petition for custody in the event the owner does not want to surrender. Consult with your legal department. Have a plan in place.

Florida State Statute – Know your authority!

4th Amendment – United States Constitution

Protects citizens from unreasonable searches and seizures



F.S.S. 828.073 *Animals found in distress.*

(2) Any law enforcement officer, any animal control officer certified pursuant to s. 828.27, or any agent of any county or of any society or association for the prevention of cruelty to animals appointed under s. 828.03 may:

- (a) **Lawfully take custody of any animal found neglected or cruelly treated by removing the animal from its present location,** or
- (b) Order the owner of any animal found neglected or cruelly treated to provide certain care to the animal at the owner's expense without removal of the animal from its present location,

and shall **file a petition seeking relief** under this section in the county court of the county in which the animal is found within **10 days** after the animal is seized or an order to provide care is issued.

- Break out into teams
- Each team will select a lead to communicate team's responses
- There are no wrong answers!
- This workshop is intended to gain different perspectives in the field.

● Module 1

“ABC Cat Sanctuary” is a 501 C3 at-home cat sanctuary turned hoarder who is in the direct path of a hurricane. While officials are assisting residents with evacuations, they locate a single disabled woman, with approximately 100 felines inside the residence. Law enforcement reports extreme unsanitary conditions and deprivation of basic needs. Your team has been cleared to respond, given ample time to conduct a thorough investigation. Once on scene, you determine that the living conditions do not meet minimum standards of care, the felines appear emaciated and are all in need of vet care. Seizure of all felines inside the residence is urgent and necessary.

Tasks for this unit:

Once on scene, who is among the first people you contact?

What type of hoarder would this owner be classified as? (Overwhelmed caregiver, rescue hoarder, exploiter hoarder, combination?)

What is your response plan?

What equipment will you need to protect your team? (Compile a list of items your team will need to complete this assignment)

How will you utilize your team to execute the assignment?
(extraction/transport/tagging)

What methods will you use to keep track of/identify the animals you are impounding? (spreadsheet/collars/duct tape on cages)

Discuss some of the challenges you will face in this scenario.

Tasks for this unit:

Once on scene, who is the first person('s) you contact? Dispatch, Field manager, Field supervisor, Kennel Manager, Clinic/Vet staff, Law enforcement agency if available.

What is your response plan? Will vary. Assign team members with tasks to: Photograph, Document scene, on scene vet staff for initial assessment, extraction, transport.

Compile a list of items your team will need to complete this assignment. Appropriate uniform/clothing, Gloves, Disposable hazmat suit, respirator, masks, shoe covers, cat gloves, cat tongs, cat nets, transfer cages, alcohol, hand sanitizer, flea spray, tape, trash bags, water, towels, first aid kit, and Multiple Animal Surrender Forms.

How will you utilize your team to execute the assignment? (extraction/transport/tagging)

- Once assessment of the scene is complete, team up for extraction.
- Divide team into units for inside and secondary for outside (Team A, B, C, D, etc.)
- Teams inside the home shall be separated to cover the location by sections
- Team outside shall be assigned to vehicles and to assist runners with tagging and documentation
- Assign each team runners (for gear and for animals), transporters, receivers for tagging (colored tape on the transport cages), vet/kennel staff. Establish communication leads, one for each unit, as they will be responsible for each team's communication along with team safety (making sure that teams are not overexerting themselves).

What methods will you use to keep track of/identify the animals you are impounding?
spreadsheet/collars/duct tape on cages

Discuss some of the challenges you will face in this scenario? Communication, resources,

Module 2

Your agency has received a call for service to a hoarding house with a brushfire moving 10 miles an hour, giving two and a half hours of time until it reaches the property. The owner of the property has already been evacuated. The local Fire department is on scene fighting the fire and preparing the property for impact and located several malnourished horses. Neighbors also reported concern over a large amount of animals inside the residence. Once on scene you determine there are approximately 70 canines in poor physical condition (malnourished, urine scalding, severe hair loss) who were reported by officials to be living in unsanitary and hazardous conditions. Neighbors report not ever having seen the canines but can hear them barking. They stated that the number of animals have increased significantly over the years, as owner is described as an “animal lover” and can’t say no to an animal in need. This is a 4 bedroom house with free roaming canines. Owner has already been evacuated. Under state statute 828.073 “Animals found in Distress”, you may legally remove the animals without owners consent. Due to the expeditious nature of this call, at this time, this will primarily as an emergency extraction.

- What type of hoarder would this owner be classified as? (Overwhelmed caregiver, rescue hoarder, exploiter hoarder, combination?)
- Who do you contact for assistance for the Domestic animals and equine on scene? Does this have the potential to possibly rise to a criminal case? If so, why?
- How could you still document the scene for future investigation.
- What challenges will you face with working alongside multiple agencies? What can you do in the future to prepare for this scenario?

Questions:

What type of hoarder would this owner be classified as? (Overwhelmed caregiver, rescue hoarder, exploiter hoarder, combination?) **Overwhelmed caregiver.**

Who do you contact for assistance for the Domestic animals and equine on scene?

Law enforcement, communicate with dispatcher, vet techs on scene to assist with medical. Transportation, extraction team. Agriculture unit equine and animal cruelty unit if available Out of 67 counties, approx. 56 have an agriculture unit- per RH

Does this have the potential to possibly rise to a criminal case? If so, why?

How could you still document the scene for future investigation.

GoPro, video camera, etc. (Be aware of your agencies policy regarding storage of evidence), testimony from on scene LE.

What challenges will you face with working alongside multiple agencies?

Lack of communication. Know your chain of command. Know what your needs and capabilities are. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

What can you do in the future to prepare for this scenario?

Establishing MOU's ahead of time. Current list of emergency volunteers. Having a relationship with neighboring counties. Knowing what your capabilities as an agency. Fully stocked vehicles. Having equipment in designated areas for emergency response that is checked on annually.

Agency Collaboration

Determine which agencies to involve throughout the process

Begin within your community

- Local city, county, state agencies
- Utilizing vacant government buildings
- Local Shelters
- Law Enforcement Agencies
- Local Non-profits

Outside Assistance

- American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)
- Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)
- RedRover

Questions?



Thank you!