

Overwhelmed residents have animals removed from their homes

Dozens of cats, skunk among confiscated pets

By Ashley Meeks Sun-News report

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LAS CRUCES Several dozen cats were removed from two North Valley homes Wednesday by employees of Do-a Ana County Sheriff's Department and animal control.

One skunk and 34 cats and kittens came out of a house in the 700 block of San Ysidro Road and 33 cats were removed, from a hybrid breeder's home in the 600 block of King Edward Avenue, less than two miles away. Eight or nine cats at the first residence weren't able to be caught Wednesday.

No arrests were made and charges are unlikely, said Animal Control Director Curtis Childress.

"Both places asked for help, that's the key thing," he said. "It's unlikely that charges will be filed."

County residents are allowed to own up to six domestic animals without a permit, or 15 if they have a multi-animal permit. Neither couple had such a permit.

Neighbors had complained about the smell at the San Ysidro house, and seeing stray cats, said sheriff's investigator Robyn Gojkovich, who described the scene inside the house as "a big litter box."

The couple also owns three dogs, who appeared well care for, Childress said. Most of the cats have upper-respiratory infections, common when cats live in crowded situations, Gojkovich said.

"They felt bad for (the cats) and wanted to feed them and there's a lot of people out there in the same situation. Their heart's in the right place, but (the cats) multiply, multiply, multiply and they're afraid to take them to the shelter and see them put down," Gojkovich said, adding that the elderly couple had been taking in stray cats from neighbors and people who couldn't care for them for about 25 years. "We're there to help. We're not trying to put everyone in jail. Our first goal is to help the people and help the animals."

The situation at the King Edward Avenue house was different, said Childress, as most of the cats had been spayed or neutered and only one was ill with chronic allergies.

"They look like they're real well cared for," Childress said.

The Bengals (seven generations removed from a cross with a Leopard Cat) and Savannahs (seven generations removed from a cross with a serval, a cheetah-like cat) could sell for \$800 to \$1,200, said a family member, who requested anonymity for privacy.

"These'll be gone in a week," said Childress. "If I were interested in having a cat, I would get one of these. They're so cool ... You don't see too many of those in Las Cruces."

Four kittens from the San Ysidro Road house were able to be adopted before workers left the San Ysidro house, and Childress said he had no doubt the cats from the King Edward Avenue house most of which were spayed or neutered would be snapped up quickly. All the cats were transported to the Animal Service Center of the Mesilla Valley.

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