

Mesilla couple could face 106 years in jail in animal hoarding case **Sun-News report**

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LAS CRUCES - A Mesilla couple face up to 106 years in jail after entering no contest pleas to 107 misdemeanor counts of cruelty to animals related to cat hoarding, according to a Thursday news release from the district attorney's office.

A no contest plea means the defendant does not admit guilt but acknowledges that if the case were to go to trial, he or she likely would be convicted.

Lester Boyse, 59, a research assistant in the New Mexico State University agronomy and horticulture department, and Carol Boyse, 58, department head of library systems at NMSU, face a minimum five years' probation on the charges, which they pleaded to Nov. 10.

Sentencing has not yet been scheduled.

"The public in general and family members in particular need to be vigilant to help stop cat hoarding, as well as all types of animal cruelty," said District Attorney Susana Martinez.

The Boyse's home, in the 1700 block of Bilbo Lane, first came to the attention of the Mesilla Marshall, Do-a Ana Sheriff's and Do-a Ana County Animal Control offices last August when someone reported a smell, which was coming from a dead horse on the property.

Inside the home, about 101 cats were found, including four dead cats in the freezer. On the property, investigators encountered five horses, two of them dead, a pair of goats, a peacock and other animals.

The home's interior was found covered in cat hair, court records state. The living room had chain-link fencing dividing it from the rest of the house. Inside the fencing were tote and cat boxes that made up an apparent kennel. There were also live animal traps on the property that were being used to capture cats.

Carol Boyse told investigators she tried to medicate the cats and find them homes, according to court records.

The couple was arrested and released after posting \$50,000 bonds and indicted by a Do-a Ana County grand jury on multiple misdemeanor and felony charges last year.

Three horses were placed in foster care, two suffering from severe hoof problems requiring at least a year of therapy. Only seven of the cats were healthy enough to be saved, while 96 had to be euthanized due to suffering caused by upper respiratory infections, mouth ulcers and fight wounds.

Such conditions can become dangerous, not only to animals, but also to their owners, Do-a Ana sheriff's detective Robyn Gojkovich said in a written statement: "The diseases the cats carry are very contagious and can be spread very rapidly from cat to cat. If the hoarder allows the cats to go inside and outside the residence, these diseases can be passed to other cats belonging to someone else."