

## **Animal Hoarding: Dangerous to both human and animal**

More than two hundred and fifty thousand animals are victims of hoarding each year. Even though it lies in the same category, animal hoarding is very different than the abuse or neglect to an animal. In fact it may be the opposite. Most animal Hoarders are very mentally attached to their pets and feel they need more. Though most hoarders may think they care for their pets in a manner that is acceptable, though their environment and condition may be life threatening. Hoarder's houses are usually very dirty, cluttered and filled with diseases and germs. The animals in this situation cannot find a clean suitable place to eat or sleep. This is considered animal abuse.

Animal Hoarding not only hurts the animal but the human, too.

Animal Hoarding is a disease. Not only is it against the law, but it is also a mental state that one cannot usually control. Hoarding is clinically diagnosable, since it is a mental health issue. Most of the time hoarding is diagnosed along with obsessive compulsive disorder, attachment disorder,

and delusional disorder. This mental dysfunction is causing pain to the animals, the hoarder and the hoarder's family. Since this disease is completely treatable, it is easy to cure with intervention, therapy and maintaining the correct chemicals in the brain.

There are several different types of animal hoarding. Most are caused by the owner being overly attached to their animal or animals and they feel the need to keep them or the need to keep a specific type of animal in as large concentrate as possible. Since the owner cannot afford to take the animals to the veterinarian, the animals may not be spayed or neutered causing said animal to have babies and the owner to become attached to the young as well. This is a cycle that brings a person deeper and deeper into hoarding. It is also possible for the owner to feel a certain breed of animal is in danger, causing them to try to shelter or protect as many of the species as possible. In obsessive compulsive disorder sufferer's cases, it may be just a mental issue that they have to keep a certain amount of a specific animal at a time.

Animals in this situation are put through a lot of suffering and pain because the owner cannot afford to take all of the animals to the veterinarian. Since the hoarder's house may be a bit of a mess, the animals can get injured more due to

the owner not being able to care for each individually. In a hoarder's house there may be poisonous, sharp, steep, or many harmful (in general) items laying around to where the animals can reach them. No matter how clean the house and how organized the owner is, no individual animal in this situation will be able to receive the proper care and love that a true owner is supposed to supply. Animals that are victims to hoarding often suffer extreme neglect and malnourishment, along with diseases and parasites. This makes the environment around them unsafe for the animals and the humans.

In a recent case where I live, a woman about fifty two years of age was keeping sixteen cats and five dogs in a small cluttered house. When her family encouraged her to give the animals up to the adoption shelter and clean up her house, she gave in and brought animal control to help her catch the cats. They let her keep two of the dogs, since they belonged to her husband that died just two years before. She explained how this may have triggered the start of hoarding, to deal with the death of a beloved person. The cats were shy and a bit aggressive, due to the deprivation of social interaction. I helped the cleaning crew throw boxes into the trash bin outside. The house was a bit foul smelling because the woman kept everything she could. There was a lot of trash and old food, but where the animals were

kept, in the living room, she had an organized feeding system and beds and toys for the animals. It was obvious she tried her best to provide the best life that she could for the animals, even if it wasn't the best. The animals didn't suffer much more than lack of social interaction and fleas and ticks, but she still made a good decision to give the animals a better life and stop the suffering that she put in their life while she cared for them. The woman had two favorite cats that she felt would be better off with her six year old neighbor who had just lost her pet parrot. The young girl was very excited to have new additions to her family, since her only siblings were older. This small act of kindness and thought to do something right encouraged me to write about animal hoarding.

A question: Are people criminals or victims of hoarding? Even though it is illegal, most law officials are kind with the hoarders, understanding their unstable mental state. Officers sometimes wait a few weeks after the incident to begin legal action. Most hoarders have their animals confiscated and have to pay a fine for each animal. In some cases, someone may recommend therapy after they lose the animals. In some states you may be able to keep one or two of the animals, depending on the environment they live in and the overall health of the animals. Sometimes the owners become so attached that when the animal

passes away they choose to preserve the body in any way they can. Some send their deceased animals to a taxidermist, bury them, cremate them, or freeze them. This is a deeper matter of hoarding, since they have become so emotionally attached that they cannot even part with the deceased. Most animal hoarding is caused by a loss, an imbalance in the body, or a need of an emotional attachment. People that are deeply into hoarding are able to get help, such as intensive therapy or medication to rebalance the imbalance there is in their body.

How do you prevent hoarding? For one idea, get to know your neighborhood animals and owners. Start a neighborhood watch program. Visit your neighbor's homes and get to know their pets. If someone is abusing animals or hoarding animals in your neighborhood, call animal control as soon as possible. Give as much details on the situation as you can. Animal hoarding is like a drug, this addiction needs an intervention. If you know someone who is hoarding, get them as well as the animals help as soon as you can. If you are a parent or a grandparent, talk to your children or grand children about hoarding and abuse. You can tell if someone is hoarding by looking at their animal. Look for fleas and ticks, wounds, patches of missing hair, or look as though they haven't visited a veterinarian in some time. Examine

the animal's attitude. They may be shy, timid, violent or aggressive. If the owner is rude to the animal, is abusive or in any way hurts the animal, you may have a case of animal abuse or animal hoarding. Most of the time, hoarders will not take their animals out on walks or let them outside for fear they are going to be found out. Most hoarders give their animals to a shelter when they feel it is time to better both their lives and the animals.

In some special cases, keeping a few more animals than usual is normal. Some people foster animals that are too young to be adopted, or that are recovering from a health issue. Some are pet sitters that make their living on having large amounts of animals in their house that do not belong to them. Some are breeders. Usually, you can tell the difference between the two because of the environment and well being of the animals. In these special cases, the environment should be organized, clean and pet friendly.

All in all, animal hoarding hurts everyone. Not just the pets, but the human, and the person's family. Hoarding is easily prevented, and treated. Animal Hoarding is not only a crime, abusing harmless animals, but it is also a mental disease that can be clinically diagnosed, tested and treated. There are many types of animal hoarding, some more serious than others. All of

the types hurt animals though, no matter how intense the situation. In this situation, humans are believed to be both criminals and victims of a terrible mental disease. Treatment for this disease is easily found. Animal hoarding not only hurts the animals, but the humans, too.

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