

## ANIMAL HOARDING



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## TALKING POINTS

- The psychology of animal hoarding
- Recognising animal hoarders
- Focus on cat hoarding cases
- Intervention and response
- Outcomes



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## TYPES OF HOARDING

OBJECTS

ANIMALS



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### WHEN THE HUMAN – ANIMAL BOND BREAKS

Positive and beneficial relationship



One sided, harmful to people and animals



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### DEFINITION – ANIMAL HOARDER\*

- A person who accumulates a number of animals\*\*
- Fails to provide minimal standards of care

\*Used to be called "animal collector"

\*\* definition does not include an exact number ; focus is on QOL, and care



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### DEFINITION – ANIMAL HOARDER

- Fails to act or recognise the deteriorating condition of the animals and the environment
  - Disease, starvation, overcrowding and unsanitary
- Fails to see the impact on their own health and well-being



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## DEFINITION – ANIMAL HOARDER

- Fails to see the negative impact on others in the home

Matthew Degner, 14, Found Dead Outside Squalid Berwyn Home With More Than 200 Animals (VIDEO)



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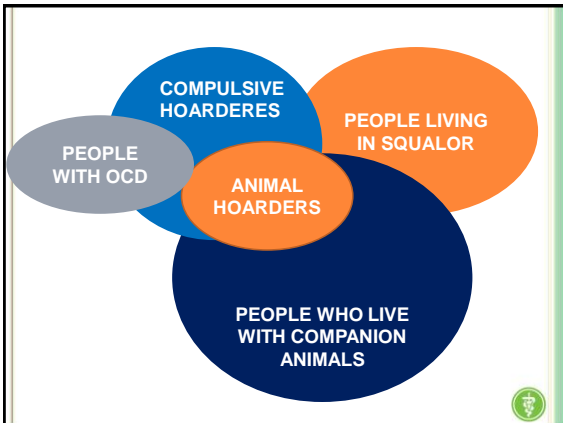
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## NOT THE FOLLOWING ...

- Feral cat caretakers
- Breeders
- Multiple pet households
- Legitimate animal rescue groups
  
- Some cat “sanctuaries” have turned into hoarding situations
  - Florida, USA



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## ANIMAL HOARDING

- Not a new problem
- Global problem
  - Reported in almost every country
    - USA
    - UK
    - Japan
    - Brazil,
    - India
    - South Africa



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## OFTEN STEREOTYPED



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## AWARENESS

- Public and professional awareness has increased due to media attention



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### HOW COMMON IS IT?

- US data
  - 5.3 hoarding cases per 100,000 people / year
  - Animals involved in about 30% of cases
  - 75% of animal cases involve dogs\* or cats
  - > 3,000 - 5,000 reported cases / year
  - If 50 animals involved per case
    - ~ 250,000 animals/year

\* Males more likely to hoard dogs



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### ANIMAL HOARDING

- Cats are very common
  - Contributes to the stereotype
- Easily available in every community
- Easier to conceal



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### HOW MANY CATS GLOBALLY?



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### HOARDERS - WHO ARE THEY? DEMOGRAPHICS

- 76-78% are women
- 72-73% are single, divorced or widowed
- 38-46% are > age 60
  - Starts in their 30's and progresses with each decade

Data from Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium [HARC]




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### WHO ARE THEY? DEMOGRAPHICS

- Often well educated
- All income levels
- Many are in "caring" professions
  - Nurses, doctors, animal related work
- 44-52% are unemployed/retired or disabled
- Large number have a relative with a similar problem

Data from Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium [HARC]




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### ANIMAL HOARDERS CHARACTERISTICS

- Preoccupied with their animals
  - Takes up most of their time and money
  - Excessive emotional attachments to animals
  - No hobbies
- Very little contact with "outsiders"
- May choose animals over close relatives
- Secretive




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### ANIMAL HOARDERS CHARACTERISTICS

- Neglect of health and hygiene
  - Personal
  - Animal
- Neglect of property
  - Decay, disrepair, accumulation of inanimate objects
  - Essential amenities unavailable
    - Sinks, showers etc...



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### NEGLECT OF PROPERTY



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### ANIMAL HOARDERS CHARACTERISTICS

- Feelings of persecution
  - Animal control agencies are seen as the enemy
- Refuse outside help
- Contempt for veterinarians
  - Claim to have special esoteric knowledge of animals and how to care for them
- May claim magical abilities to communicate with animals



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### ANIMAL HOARDERS CHARACTERISTICS

- o Denial of their behaviour
- o Minimising the problems
- o Excuses
- o Often claim they are “rescuers”
- o Almost never try to adopt animals out




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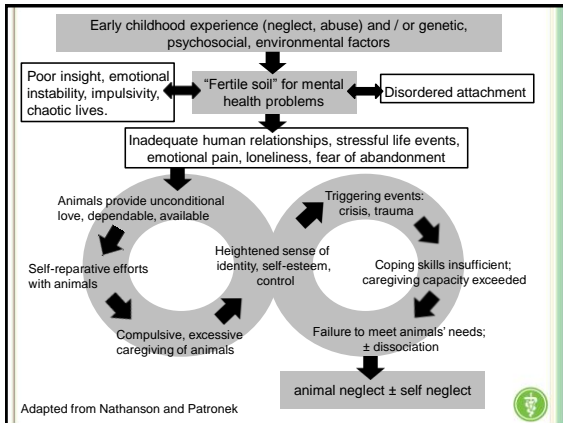
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### CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

- o In dysfunctional families children may use a pet as an object of love and care as a means of escape and as a substitute for parents who are absent or reject them



Rynearson, J Elder Abuse and Neglect 2009




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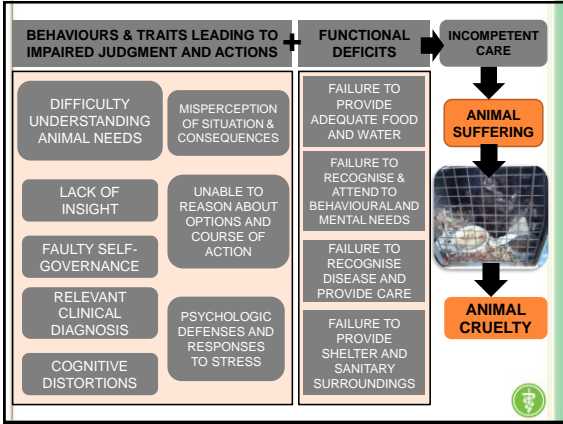
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	Freedom from hunger & Thirst	Freedom from pain, injury, disease	Freedom from fear and distress	Freedom from discomfort	Freedom to express normal behavior, socialization	Happiness: All mental and physical needs, most wants	
High quality of life	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Always	Competent caregiving; welfare safeguarded, nurturing environment
Good quality of life	Yes	Yes	Yes	+/-	+/-	Often	
Borderline quality of life	Yes	+/-	+/-	+/-	No	Rarely	Borderline caregiving; animals at risk
Poor quality of life	+/-	+/-	No	No	No	Never	
A life not worth living	No	No	No	No	No	Never	Incompetent caregiving; animals suffer

**Minimal caregiving competency** (circled in the original image)

**Cruelty typically prosecuted** (indicated by an arrow pointing to the 'A life not worth living' row)

Patronek G. 2010. Adapted from FAVVC, 2009

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**WELFARE ISSUES**

- Stress and decreased resistance to infection
- Infectious disease(s)
  - Upper respiratory tract infections
- GI diseases
- Severe eye infections
- Oral ulcers
- Parasite infestation- external, internal
- Anaemia



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**WELFARE ISSUES**

- Diarrhoea
- Infected wounds, pain
- Lack of exercise
  - Muscle wastage, sores
- Starvation
- Dehydration



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**PSYCHOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION**

<b>Axis I - clinical disorders</b>	<b>Axis II - other disorders</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Bipolar</li><li>○ Phobias</li><li>○ Schizophrenia</li><li>○ Eating disorders</li><li>○ Substance abuse</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Personality disorders</li><li>○ Developmental disorders</li></ul>



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### OTHER (ADDITIONAL) PSYCHIATRIC ISSUES

- Borderline personality
- Antisocial personality
- Depression
- Addictions
- Münchausen by proxy



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### HOARDING DISORDER

- DSM-V [diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders] 2013 edition
  - A new stand alone disorder
  - No longer classified as OCD
- Therapy – still in its infancy
- No long term studies

Mataix-Cols et al 2010; Depression and Anxiety 27: 556-72



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### TYPES OF HOARDING

- Overwhelmed caregivers
- Rescue hoarder
- Exploiter hoarder



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### OVERWHELMED CAREGIVER

- Aware of some of the problems
- Animals are family – strong attachment
- Minimise but do not deny the problem
- Less secretive
- More likely to agree to help



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### EXPLOITER

- Collects animals for their own psychological needs
- Usually have sociopathic or personality disorder
- Extreme denial
- Reject any outside help
- Manipulative, lie, actively evade the law



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### RESCUE HOARDER

- Oppose euthanasia
- “no kill” philosophy
- No such thing as a life not worth living
- Their mission is “to save animals”
- Actively acquire animals
- Animals come in but do not leave



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### RESCUE HOARDER

- May be a registered charity
- Believe that they have the unique ability to care for animals
- Often have a network of enablers
- Litigious



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### RESCUE HOARDER

- Often are, or were supported by local agencies and the public
- Public sympathy
- Situation may not be severe enough for social services or prosecutors to become involved



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### COMMON EXCUSES FOR THE SITUATION

- The animals just got there
- They arrived like this
- "I have an injury so cannot clean or feed etc..."
- The hospice argument



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### INDICATORS OF HOARDING

- Unwilling to say how many pets are in the home
- Using a surrogate pet to get medication for others
- Seeking medication refills without bringing the pet to the clinic
- Claiming to have just found the pet in bad condition



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### INDICATORS OF HOARDING

- Traveling long distances for care
- Perfuming to conceal odours
- Showing an interest in acquiring other animals
- Visits for problems related to poor preventative health care
- Rarely bringing in the same animal



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### REPETITION OF BEHAVIOUR

- Without intervention and lifelong supervision almost all hoarders resume their behaviour
- Many will move to a new location and start again



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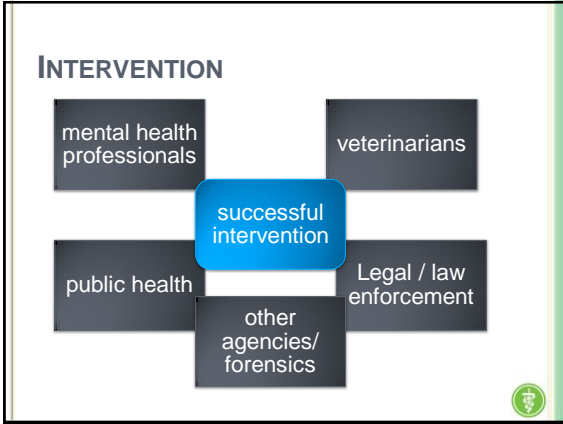
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### INTERVENTION

TYPE OF HOARDER	PERSUASION	THREAT OF LEGAL ACTION	PROSECUTION
OVERWHELMED CAREGIVER	✓	✓	OFTEN NOT NEEDED
EXPLOITER	✗	✗	USUALLY NEEDED
RESCUE HOARDER	✗	AIM FOR DOWNSIZING	MAY BE NEEDED

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- ### WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF INTERVENTION?
- Care for people at risk
    - Child and elder neglect may also be present (10-15% of cases)
    - Zoonotic diseases
  - Mandatory long-term psychiatric care and monitoring
    - Relapse prevention

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### WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF INTERVENTION?

- Probation, no contact with animals order
- Care for all the animals
  - Medical care, adoption, euthanasia



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### PROSECUTION

- Is essential for a successful outcome in many cases
- The majority of animal hoarders are found competent to stand trial

**PSYCHO-LEGAL APPROACH**



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### RESPONSE

- Trained personnel
- Dangerous conditions – “Hazmat”
  - Zoonotic diseases
  - Ammonia
  - Fungal fragments
- Gathering of evidence (forensics)
  - Essential for prosecution
  - Treated like a crime scene



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## RESPONSE

- Expensive
- Resources
  - Where will the animals go?
- Manpower
- Multiple agencies involved
  - Must be coordinated
- Must engage law enforcement
  - Animal issues may not be a high priority




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## LARGE SCALE DISASTER

### Incident command response



<http://vet.tufts.edu/hoarding/intervention.htm>




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## RESPONSE




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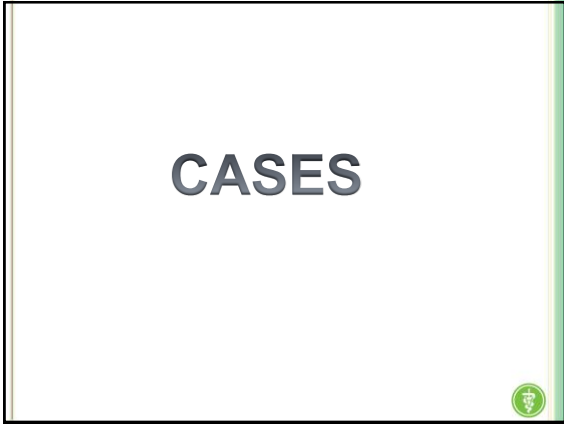
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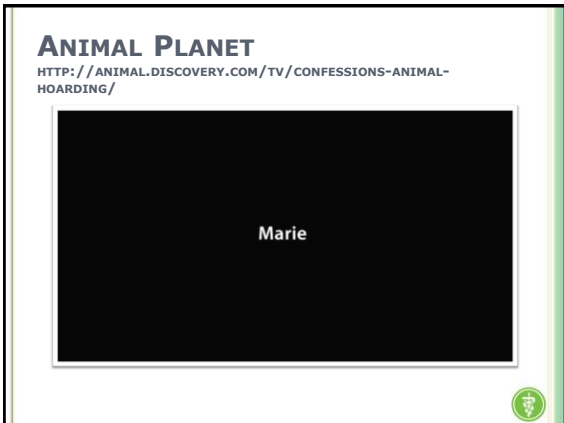
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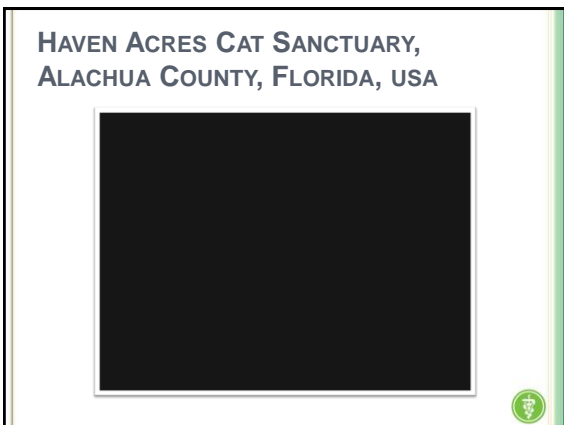
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# CARE GUIDELINES – ANIMAL CONTROL ASSOCIATION

- o 10-15 minutes per animal per day
- o 700 x 15 = 10500 minutes
- o 10500/60 = 175 hours




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## RESOURCES

<http://vet.tufts.edu/hoarding/index.html>

The Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium

Welcome

**What you will find here:**

This site brings together the work of staff, as well as clinical resources from throughout the US to help you better understand the phenomenon of animal hoarding. It is not an officially endorsed or endorsed site for and endorsement, or funding. It is not a place to make decisions about the care, management, treatment, and well-being of animals. It is not a place to make decisions about the care, management, treatment, and well-being of animals. It is not a place to make decisions about the care, management, treatment, and well-being of animals.

**Our goal:**

To educate, inform, and support the broader community of animal hoarding through research, education, and clinical practice. To do this, we will provide information, resources, and tools to help you better understand the phenomenon of animal hoarding. We will also provide information, resources, and tools to help you better understand the phenomenon of animal hoarding.

Founded in 1997




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# RESOURCES

The screenshot shows the ASPCA website's 'RESOURCES' section. The main heading is 'Animal Hoarding'. Below it, there is a definition: 'Animal hoarding is a complex and intricate public health and community issue. Its effects are far-reaching and encompass mental health, animal welfare and public safety concerns.' A list of criteria for animal hoarding is provided:
 

- More than the typical number of companion animals
- Inability to provide even minimal standards of nutrition, sanitation, shelter and veterinary care, with the neglect often resulting in starvation, illness and death
- Denial of the inability to provide the necessary care and the impact of that failure on the animals, the household and human occupants of the dwelling

 The definition is attributed to the 'Hearing of Animals Research Consortium, an independent group of academic researchers based in Massachusetts. The full definition and more info can be found at <http://www.aspcanet.org/hoarding>. A small image of a cat is visible with the text 'Will You Help Her? Take the Pledge.' and a 'Share This' button showing 38 shares.

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# QUESTIONS

The photograph shows a bedroom with a bed covered in a red blanket. Numerous cats of various breeds and colors are sitting on the bed, some looking towards the camera. The room has a window with blinds and a television on a stand in the background.

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