

# ANIMAL HOARDING - It's a human issue but it's the animals that suffer

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# OUR MISSION

**To prevent cruelty to animals  
by actively promoting their  
care and protection.**

# WHAT TYPE OF THINGS DO WE DO?

- Enforce the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (POCTAA)
- Help animals who are being neglected by their owners
- Investigate illegal dog and rooster fighting
- Rescue animals
- Educate pet owners
- Help farmers in times of drought, bushfires and floods
- Inspect places that sell animals such as sale yards and pet shops
- Confiscate prohibited items



# DEFINITION OF AN ANIMAL HOARDER

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

From the Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium  
[www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding)





# ANIMAL HOARDING

- In majority of cases there is also an accumulation of inanimate objects
- Animal waste is rarely removed
- Take measures to not attract attention to the amount of animals in their homes:-
  - Restricting access to visitors – even to repair broken equipment or utilities ( sometimes no running water or power)
  - Animals are rarely seen outside the home
  - View into house is blocked
  - Limit the amount of animals taken to the vet (if ever)



# DEALING WITH HOARDER CASES

- Form a relationship. Gaining the trust of owners can be crucial in solving or lessening the problem
- Educate on basic animal husbandry
- Reduce the number of animals by rehoming & de-sexing
- Follow up visits
- Prosecution is usually a last resort





# THE ANIMAL WELFARE PROBLEM

Common problems with animals in hoarding situations:

- Stress from overcrowding
- Competition for resources
- Poor socialisation
- Severe, chronic skin conditions
- Heavy parasite burdens
- Fight wounds
- Congenital and hereditary disorders



# TYOLOGY OF ANIMAL HOARDING



## OVERWHELMED CAREGIVER

- Overwhelmed caregiver
- Some awareness, more reality-based
- More passive acquisition
- Problems often triggered by change in circumstances
- Unable to problem-solve effectively
- Likely to be socially isolated
- Self-esteem linked to role as caregiver
- Fewer issues with authorities



## RESCUE HOARDER

- Mission leading to unavoidable compulsion
- Fear of death
- Active vs passive acquisition
- She/he is the only one who can provide care
- Rescue- followed by adoption becomes rescue only care
- May have extensive network of enablers or be a group activity



## EXPLOITER HOARDING

- Tends to have sociopathic characteristics
- Lacks empathy for people or animals
- Indifferent to harm caused
- Rejects outsiders' concerns
- Superficial charm and charisma
- Lacks guilt or remorse
- Manipulative and cunning
- Adopts role of expert with need to control



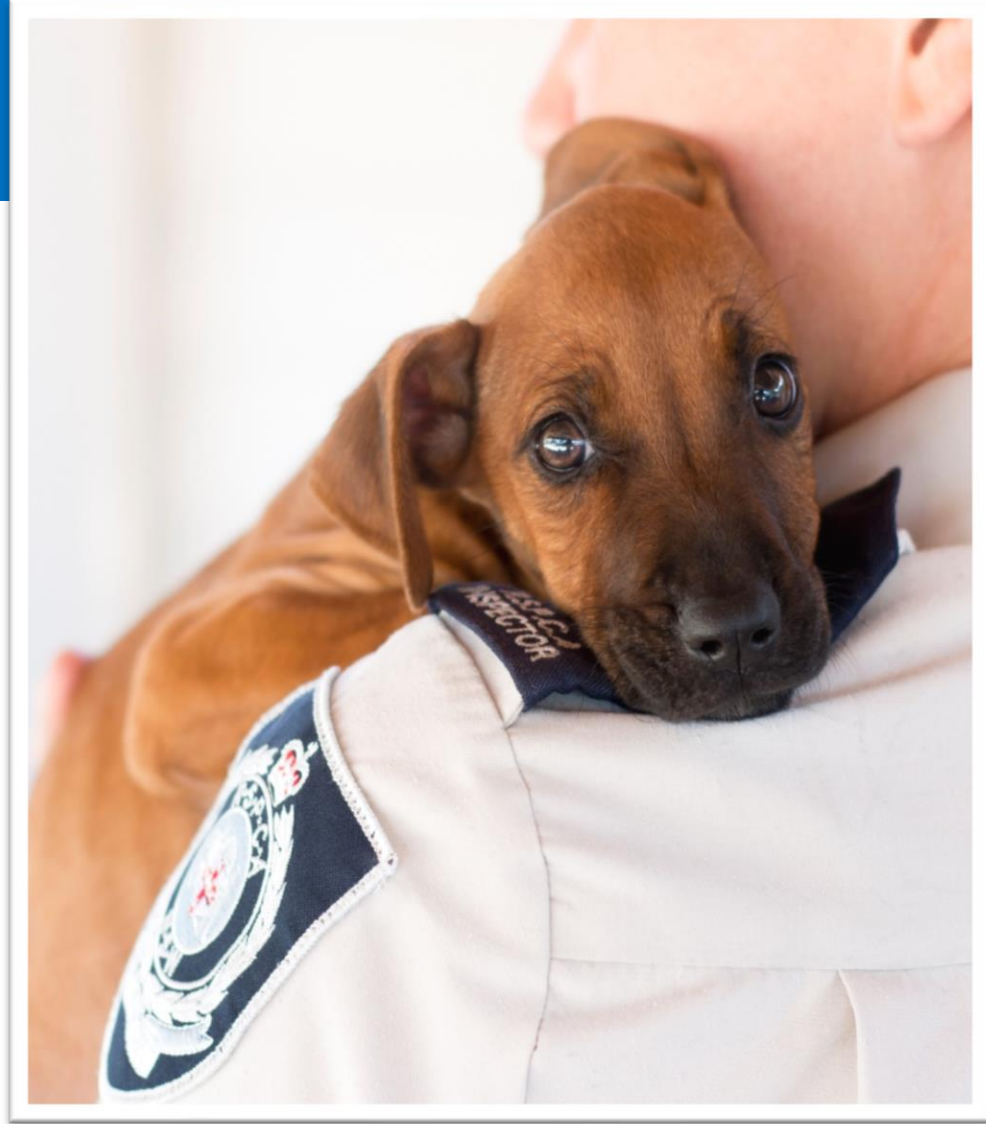
# ANIMAL HOARDING THE HUMAN WELFARE PROBLEM

- Owners are usually living in the same conditions as those the animals are kept in.
- They often have very strong bonds with their animals even though the way that they keep them can be neglectful and cruel
- Children or the elderly may also be living in the home
- There may be drug and alcohol related problems



# THE IMPACT ON THE RSPCA

- Large amount of resources & co-ordination required – Inspectors, animal ambulances, veterinary and shelter staff
- Enormous cost of veterinary care and ongoing treatment and care costs
- Overcrowding in animal shelters and increased workload



# THE IMPACT ON THE RSPCA

- Health concerns for the staff involved:
  - High ammonia levels – respiratory protection often needed
  - Injuries such as bites and scratches from animals who are frightened, unused to being handled and in some cases aggressive
  - Injuries from capturing animals in an unsafe environment due to physical obstacles such as accumulated rubbish
  - Resistance from owners - sometimes become violent
  - Zoonotic diseases e.g. Salmonellosis, Giardia, Ringworm, Psittacosis, Sarcoptic Mange
  - Emotional impact on staff and volunteers





# ANIMAL HOARDING CASE

# STUDY

- Complaint received after a member of the public attended the address to purchase a puppy. They had driven from Victoria and were appalled by what they saw. They departed the property and immediately called the RSPCA.
- Warrant was applied for due to all the animals being inside
- 31 Dogs and 42 cats seized
- All living in a small three bedroom house
- Majority of the cats were unsocialised and difficult to handle
- Ammonia was detected by sense of smell. HAZMAT had to be called and the Airborne ammonia contamination was found to be 29 parts per million

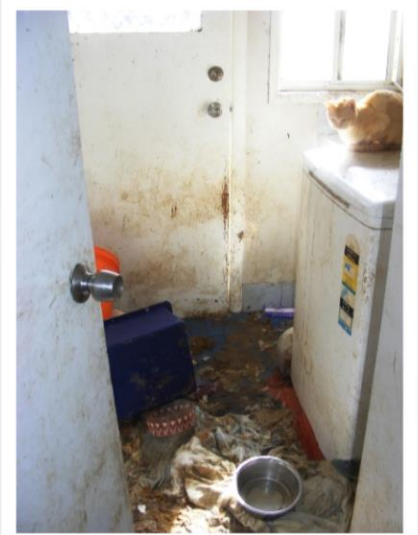


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# ANIMAL HOARDING

**RSPCA**   
New South Wales



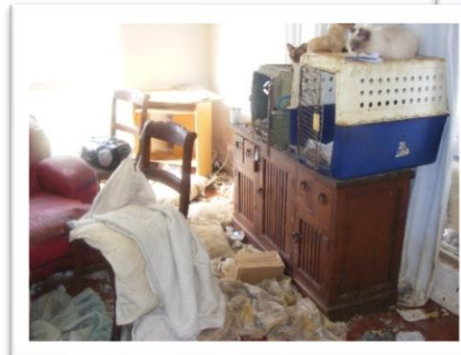


# ANIMAL HOARDING



# ANIMAL HOARDING CASE STUDY

- **JUDGMENT:** 69-year-old Deepwater resident, Ms Valerie Elizabeth Hicks, appeared in Glen Innes Local Court on Wednesday 25 January 2017 and pleaded guilty to 19 charges of animal cruelty in relation to 31 dogs and 43 cats.
- **FINES/OUTCOME:** \$19,000 and sentenced to one month in jail. Not able to own more than one dog for a period of five years.
- **VET/BOARDING FEES:** \$8,110.82
- Ms Hicks was also convicted of 83 charges of animal cruelty in Queensland in 2008



# ANIMAL HOARDING

**“The animal welfare problem cannot be solved without helping owners improve their own welfare”**



# ANIMAL HOARDING

## Collaborative approach

- Identify government departments and other agencies that can work with us and set up memorandums of understanding
- Become part of task force of experts that examine the issues and make recommendations on the most effective approach
- Develop formalised reporting systems between agencies to facilitate response and allow for cross reporting
- Be part of a response team that is called in to manage hoarder cases



# ANIMAL HOARDING

## What can council do to help

- Help the RSPCA identify situations that may turn into hoarding
- Where possible place orders on people to house a specific amount of animals in line with local council policies
- Enforcing microchipping and registration which may encourage a person to reduce numbers
- Utilise different departments within such as the environmental officers.
- If a person is a breeder/ hoarder ascertain if they have a DA approval for additional structures on their property or to run a business from that address



# ANIMAL HOARDING

- We acknowledge the strong affiliation between human and animal welfare, and believe that it is consistent with our goal of preventing animal cruelty to continue to develop programs and partnerships that have both an animal and a human welfare focus.
- By supporting pet owners we support the welfare of their pets and assist with reducing the incidence of abuse and neglect.





# THANK YOU

