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Animal Shelter Receives 367 Animals During Investigation; Aldie Resident Faces Cruelty Charges

The Loudoun County Department of Animal Services (LCAS) took custody of 367 animals following an animal hoarding investigation in Aldie. Cynthia L. Peer, 39, has been charged with 51 Class 1 misdemeanors and 67 Class 4 misdemeanors, totaling 118 charges, after a search of her residence revealed hundreds of animals in squalid, unlawful conditions.

Loudoun County Animal Services Humane Law Enforcement officers and medical staff determined that the animals were living in conditions that created an immediate threat to their life, health and/or safety. On June 10, 2021, Peer voluntarily surrendered 367 animals, which included primarily rabbits, quail and pheasants, as well as chinchillas, ducks, chickens, turkeys, guineafowl, peafowl and sheep.

The animals were found living in confined spaces filled with feces. Temperatures in one enclosure exceeded 116 degrees. Overcrowded, unsanitary enclosures contributed to widespread illness, chronic injury and poor body condition, with a veterinarian determining that many of the birds were at the lowest possible weight to survive.

“The situation at the residence was very troubling,” said Chief of Humane Law Enforcement Chris Brosan. “These animals appear to have spent much, if not all, of their lives in tiny, filthy enclosures, with only enough algae-filled water to prevent death by dehydration, and tragically, this is all that the law requires for agricultural animals.”

“In addition, it appears that many of them were deprived of food or water entirely, confined in dangerous spaces, and left with untreated injuries for prolonged periods of time. Many of the rabbits had lived so long in small wire cages that they had grown too large to be removed through the door to the cage, requiring the cages to be cut apart to rescue them,” Chief Brosan added.

LCAS is providing medical care for the 367 animals in preparation for finding them adoptive homes. Peer is scheduled to face the charges in Loudoun General District Court on July 28, 2021. A conviction of a Class 1 misdemeanor is punishable by up to 12 months in prison per count, and a fine of up to \$2,500. A conviction of a Class 4 misdemeanor is punishable by a fine of up to \$250 per count. Any person convicted of these charges may be prohibited by the court from future possession or ownership of animals.

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Some of the squalid rabbit housing conditions found on an Aldie property.



One of the rabbits rescued from a property in Aldie is recovering with medical treatment from Loudoun County Animal Services.

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