

Lee County Investigation Ends Lehigh Puppy Mill

Fort Myers, Florida, 11/19/09—Lee County Domestic Animal Services (LCDAS) responded to an anonymous call on Tuesday, November 17, 2009 regarding the sale of small breed dogs and puppies in poor condition at 1606 Monroe Ave., Lehigh Acres. A total of 25 dogs and four cats were found on the property owned by Jess and Kathleen Holden.

At the rear of the property LCDAS found 20 dogs and one cat housed in a 10 ft. x 20 ft. wooden structure without proper ventilation and with feces and urine covering the floor. There was an abundance of flies along with maggots on some of the food and feces. The animals were confined in crates stacked two high on each side of the shed where they sat in their own feces and urine. The owners admitted they were not taken out of the crates for exercise.

According to the Holdens, they have been breeding and selling dogs for 25 years and moved to Lehigh in April of 2009. They agreed to surrender the animals due to their inability to provide proper care and housing as required by Lee County Ordinance and Florida State Statute. Rather than petition the courts for custody and file charges LCDAS determined that it was in the animals' best interest to accept their surrender so they could be properly vaccinated, de-wormed and treated for any other problems immediately and placed into appropriate permanent homes without delay. LCDAS will conduct regular checks to ensure that the owners never attempt to house animals in these conditions again. Charges will be filed for any future violations.

A total of 29 animals were taken from the property, 24 Yorkies and Maltese, one German Shepherd, and four cats. They have been examined, received veterinary care and were bathed. Most are ready for adoption now. Animal Services' kennels open are open from 11:30 am to 3:30 pm Monday through Saturday for adoptions. The shelter is located at 5600 Banner Drive, Fort Myers, next to the Lee County Sheriff's Office off of Six Mile Cypress Parkway. View all animals available for adoption at www.LeeLostPets.com or call 239-533-7387 (LEE-PETS) for further information.