

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROCESSING SCENES OF SUSPECTED ANIMAL NEGLECT

This resource outlines features that may raise your index of suspicion for criminal neglect. No one item is indicative of abuse, but a closer look into a situation may be warranted when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination.

What is Animal Neglect?

- The legal definition for animal neglect varies among jurisdictions and statutes.
- Generally speaking, animal neglect is the failure to provide the basic care required for an animal to survive and thrive.
- Basic care includes adequate:
 - Living Environment
 - Food and water
 - Medical care

General Considerations:

- Neglect can occur with a single animal or with multiple animals.
- Neglect cases may include living and/or deceased animals.
- A common concept with neglect is ‘the absence of evidence is the evidence’.
- The neglect of one or all aspects of basic care may occur.
- Much of the evidence will be the animal itself and will be documented by the Veterinarian who examines the animal. It is therefore important to not make assumptions based on an animal’s external appearance alone (e.g., a skinny animal could be so because it’s undernourished, or because it is under the care of a veterinarian and still failing to thrive due to a documented medical condition).

Large-Scale Neglect (i.e., multi-animal neglect)

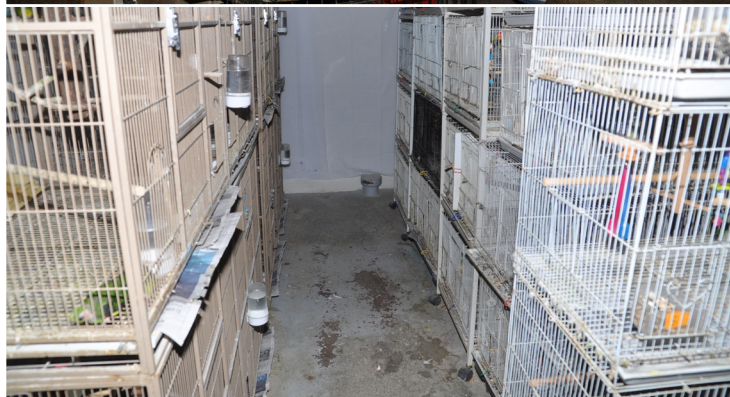
Large scale neglect is often seen in situations of hoarding and commercial breeding. These situations can appear very similar without context.

Hoarding

- When an owner maintains more domestic animals than they can house or care for.
- These situations may start with the good intention of rescuing.

Large-scale Commercial Breeding

- When an owner runs a commercial breeding operation that mass-produces purportedly purebred or “designer” domestic animals. However, the health and care of the animals is inadequate in order to maintain a low overhead and maximize profits.
- In contrast to a reputable breeder whose animals are physically and psychologically cared for.



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Scene and Evidence Documentation

Documentation methods should include notes and photographs, and measurement and/or diagrams when relevant, and should cover both good and bad conditions

Food and water

- Is there adequate **type, frequency, quantity** and **quality** of food and water for the number and species present?
 - Document food packaging containers (e.g., food cans) including the species and age of animal it is for.
 - Document information on recommended frequency and type of food for specialized populations (e.g., neonate).
 - Document the presence or absence of food/water in designated receptacles or accessible on the floor.
 - Document quality issues such as mold, insects or freezing of water.
- Is the food and water **accessible** to all sizes of animals present?
 - If necessary, measure the heights of food/water receptacles to determine if all sized animals are capable of accessing the contents at varying degrees of fullness.
- Is there a lack of feces? Are there non-food items visible in feces?
 - Document if there is a lack of feces as this can indicate the animal is not producing waste, or possibly that it is being eaten.
 - Document (if possible) where consumed non-food items may have come from.

Medical Care

- Document all medications (prescription, OTC and for other species not found on the property), evidence of home remedies, veterinary records, and medical supplies.

Deceased Remains

- Search: freezers, trash cans, burn piles and possible burials (surface, single and mass).

Document Evidence that may be present

- General: tax filing records, rescue or sanctuary applications, 501c3 paperwork, donation requests, documents that support proof of residency/ownership, adoption contracts, policies/procedures for the location or employee schedule/payroll documents
- Breeding: breeding schedules, sales records, breed registration paperwork, kennel/breeder licenses

Related ASPCA information printables on ASPCAPro.org:

- Live-Animal Documentation
- Features that Raise Suspicion for Criminal Neglect

Living Environment

- Is the animal's living area adequately protected from **extreme conditions**?
- Is the environment adequate for various **weather elements**?
 - Take temperature readings at multiple times and locations (e.g., inside and outside doghouse) as conditions change throughout the day.
 - Document if weather conditions cause drastic change to the living area (e.g., does the area become muddy and pool water with excessive rain?)
- Is the **size** of the living area appropriate for the number of animals in it?
 - Measure the dimensions of enclosures that appear too small.
- Is the living area **clean**? Is the living area capable of being cleaned?
 - Document excessive amounts of animal waste or trash present.
 - Document enclosures stacked on top of each other, and waste allowed to drop through.
 - Consider whether enclosures are capable of being thoroughly cleaned of feces and urine saturation.
 - Document evidence of rodent or insect infestation.
 - Document deceased remains near or accessible to the live animals.
- Is the living area **safe** and void of manageable dangers?
 - Document rusted metal, nails or other sharp hazards.
 - Consider regional predators and whether outdoor living areas are secured against them.
 - Consider if structures (i.e., floor, ceiling and walls) are stable, solid and non-porous (or sealed).
 - Document the presence and possible access to toxic substances such as poisonous plants or rodenticides.
- Is the **air quality** poor due to excessive ammonia?
 - Ammonia levels should be recorded prior to ventilation of an enclosed area and again after.
 - Caution! Be aware of human safety and take proper precautions in areas of high ammonia (OSHA regulations may apply).