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Authorities seize 166 dogs from suspected puppy mill

Animals found to be in 'poor condition,' according to SPCA

Neco Cockburn , Ottawa Citizen
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Provincial offence charges are pending against a Bancroft-area man after 166 dogs were seized from a suspected puppy mill last week.

Various mixed small-dog breeds - including poodles, Pekinese, terriers and beagles - were seized when an Ontario SPCA inspector, along with a veterinarian and OPP officer, executed a search warrant on April 2.

The animals were wading in liquid feces and were found to be in very "poor condition," according to the Ontario SPCA.

Some of the dogs suffered from dehydration, anemia, lethargy and parasites and needed immediate medical treatment, the SPCA said.

A barn on the property contained about 30 pens, while another 30 pens were kept outside. About three dogs were kept in each pen, said Ontario SPCA spokeswoman Kristin Williams.

"There was no ventilation for the barn," Ms. Williams said.

SPCA officials had received complaints about the male resident for 12 years. During that time, orders were issued and the resident complied, the SPCA said. Although some animals had been seized from the property in the past, they were returned as a result of compliance.

The dogs rounded up in the latest seizure have been placed in shelters in Napanee, Brockville, Belleville, Renfrew and Kingston.

The SPCA said it is likely that their fate will be determined by the Animal Care Review Board, a voluntary committee set up by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. If the seizure is determined to be justified, the man could be forced to surrender the animals, which would then be available for adoption.

The SPCA said charges under the Ontario SPCA Act are pending. If convicted, the man could face up to two years in jail and a \$60,000 fine.

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The raid occurred a day before the Ontario government introduced proposed legislation aimed at toughening the province's animal protection laws.

The proposed legislation, which passed first reading, would require veterinarians to report suspected abuse and neglect and protect them from liability for doing so. It would also see people who abuse animals be eligible for jail, fines and lifetime ownership bans.

The legislation would also allow the Ontario SPCA to inspect places where animals are kept for entertainment, boarding, sale or hire.

"There isn't a provincial offence currently for causing distress to an animal. That limits our investigative powers quite significantly. This new bill would result in much more comprehensive investigative care," said Ms. Williams.

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