

# Bradford police seize 105 canines from owners, investigate possible neglect

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Sometimes, one-word quotes carry the most weight, even if it's the same comment, over and over.

Such was the case Friday afternoon at Concord's Pope Memorial SPCA, where I interviewed 42 sources for this column. All succinctly told me the same thing.

“Squeak.”

They squeaked while breastfeeding, they squeaked while squirming on the floor and they'll squeak their way into the Concord area's heart, judging by the response that evolved once this story broke.

The story about the 105 mostly golden retrievers and lab mixes taken from a kennel in Bradford earlier this week, then split up between the Concord SPCA and the Humane Society of Greater Nashua. Bradford police are investigating if cruelty and neglect charges are warranted against a yet-to-be-named individual. None of the dogs were suffering from life-threatening injuries or illnesses.

Meanwhile, the local SPCA received about 300 inquiries – via email, phone and personal visits – in a 24-hour period. And once folks get a look at the photo that accompanies this column, or once they see the puppies for themselves and hear what they have to say, good luck not carrying one home.

Karen Moran, the president of the SPCA's board of directors, had counted 42 puppies on Thursday, “but that's only if one of the adults here didn't have puppies,” she said.

Turns out, a rescued mother gave birth Friday in Nashua, and a mom here was ready to deliver as well.

“I know every one of these faces,” Moran continued. “These faces; I can't stand it.”

Moran and Cathy Emerson, the SPCA's longtime director of operations, gave me a sneak peek of the squeak Friday. Visitors turned green with envy once they noticed I was being escorted toward an unseen, off-limits area out back.

We passed through a long, narrow office, where employees were busy at their desks during a busy time. Passing rows of cages, I met Bee and her five puppies and Nellie and her seven and Meredith and her four and Arizona and her nine.

Arizona showed off her parenting skills, making a circle around her pile of squeaking children to make sure all nine were still there.

A window on a closed door was covered with a towel, a calming method for a nervous dog. “Our focus is to get them comfortable and happy,” Emerson told me during our tour.

Velma the German Shepherd looked out of place, and in fact was, rescued from a different animal abuse case, this one in Bristol, and a resident at the Concord SPCA now for two years.

Which seamlessly led into a conversation about animal abuse laws. The issue came into focus, here and across parts of the country, when 75 Great Danes, many with infections and illnesses, were seized from a home in Wolfeboro owned by Christina Fay.

Those dogs, viewed as evidence, had to wait to be adopted while the case worked its way through the court system. That burdens shelters financially while the dogs remain in less-than ideal circumstances.

“We’re hoping to have some of the laws changed,” Emerson said.

The town of Wolfeboro, which removed Fay’s dogs and placed them with New Hampshire’s chapter of the Humane Society of the United States, said it spent about \$2 million to provide for these dogs before they could be adopted.

Finding a way to finance the care of rescued dogs has been difficult. A plan to charge the accused abuser was nixed because of concerns over due process.

A segment of the state budget calls for the creation of a separate fund to defray costs, with \$100,000 deposited each year. We’ll know more soon.

And while lawmakers try to figure out what’s right, yet another animal abuse case – the seventh during the past three years – has grabbed headlines. The Bradford kennel owner relayed some of his dogs’ names to the Pope Memorial staff, and police in a statement said, “The owner of the kennel was and remains cooperative.”

The press release also mapped out some of the background.

It read, “On June 11 the warrant was executed, and initial evaluation of the scene revealed squalid conditions raising concerns of communicable diseases and the health concerns for the animals.”

The dogs – moms, their puppies and other expected moms – are waiting. Emerson said all 55 dogs being cared for in Concord will recover, and adoptions could begin as early as two to three weeks from now.

The days-old puppies, their eyes closed, will need an additional six weeks or so before they'll be ready to move into a new home. Emerson and Moran said money is no object.

“Whatever it costs,” Emerson told me, “we are committed to this.”

At that moment, a puppy squeaked.

Nothing more needed to be said.