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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Animal shelter provides foster care for the pets of abused women

CAMARILLO, Calif. – Ventura County Animal Services provides a foster care program for the animal victims of domestic violence. By providing safe shelter for their pets, the program enables women to leave an abusive relationship sooner.

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence reports that 71 percent of women in abusive relationships said that their abuser had threatened, harmed or killed a family pet. Other research indicates that as many as 48 percent of domestic violence victims remain with their abusers over fear of what might happen to their pet.

“This is a complex issue, but we don’t want fear for a pet to be the reason a woman stays in an abusive relationship,” said Animal Services Director Tara Diller. “If we can help to relieve a woman of concern about her pet, it will enable her to concentrate on escaping the abuse. March is Women’s History Month and we think this is a perfect time to let women know we can help.”

Animal Services has a dedicated group of volunteers that accepts pets into their homes on a temporary basis. These compassionate people play a vital role in the life of many animals at the County’s shelters, but especially for those that are coming out of homes where there is abuse. By providing a loving home environment for their pets, the foster families give some power back to victims of domestic violence, helping them to make difficult decisions about their future. Cathy Shanley, who runs the foster care program says the shelter needs more foster families.

“We want these pets to be cared for in loving homes,” said Shanley. “We provide food and any necessary medical care or prescriptions for the pets. All the foster families have to provide is a stable, caring home. The more families who volunteer, the more women and pets we can help.”

The program is anonymous to protect the safety of the women involved. Animal Services is typically contacted for an agency-assist by the Sheriff’s office, Child Protective Services or Adult Protective Services. An Animal Control Officer is dispatched to pick up the pet so the woman or family involved can be taken to safety as quickly as possible. In some cases, a family member may bring the pet directly to the Animal Shelter.

“We know that, sometimes, pets aren’t allowed in refuges for abused women,” said Diller, “but if a woman’s only option is to go to that refuge, we want to give her an opportunity for the temporary care of her pet while she works on her independence.”



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Women can bring their pets directly to the shelters in Camarillo or Simi Valley. The Camarillo shelter is open seven days a week from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. The Simi Valley shelter is also open seven days a week, from 12 – 6 p.m. Field officers are on duty 24 hours-per- day, 365 days-a-year. If assistance is needed in the late evening or very early morning, call the shelter's normal number, 805-388-4341 or 888-223-PETS (7387) and proceed through the voicemail menu options until you hear the choice - "direct a message to the officer on duty." People wishing to serve as foster parents should contact Shanley at: cathy.shanley@ventura.org.

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