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Veterinarian notes cats are seeking new homes; *Death is the other option*



Needles the community cat of the unrecorded subdivision known as Jemlands relaxes in the area on Tuesday afternoon (July 17). He was the first cat spayed in the current trap-neuter-release program of Levy County Animal Services.

Needles is current on his rabies vaccination too. The tip of his left ear was surgically removed for easy identification as a community cat that has been neutered. He has become less

feral, although he is fearful of most humans. There are a couple of people that Needles allows to feed and pet him. He seems to want to become an indoor cat, however so far conditions have not been conducive for that transition in his living arrangements. (He is named Needles because he blends in with the pine needles in the area.)

Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © July 18, 2018 at 11:48 a.m.

BRONSON -- Levy County Veterinarian Dr. Darlene Esler mentioned on Tuesday (July 17) about the need for families to adopt cats from Levy County Animal Services to avoid the county having to euthanize some felines.

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Goldy the cat Hardison helps type stories and captions. This cat was adopted from the wild almost a decade ago after it is believed a raptor of some sort (probably a hawk) dropped the kitten from the sky, because she was too scrawny to eat. She was adopted. Goldy became the senior mascot of *HardisonInk.com* and has helped in marketing the daily news website.

Inky the cat Hardison was adopted from Dr. Ronald Spink of Chiefland some years ago to provide Goldy with a cat friend, and to assist as a junior mascot for the daily news website. Although both feline mascots of *HardisonInk.com* are always indoors, they are both neutered and both are up-to-date on their rabies vaccinations. In this photo, Inky is seen as she tries to blend in with stuffed animals after walking behind a television screen.

There were 92 cats (most were feral) that had to be euthanized between April 1 and June 30, the veterinarian said.

Dr. Esler was speaking with the Levy County Board of County Commissioners Tuesday morning about an amendment in the final budget for Fiscal Year 2017-2018, which ended Sept. 30, 2018, where there was a need to move \$8,424 that had been donated to the county from the donation line item to the line item for the purchase of medical supplies.

On a motion by County Commissioner Lilly Rooks, seconded by County Commissioner Mike Joyner, there was a 5-0 vote granting that requested resolution.

County Attorney Anne Bast Brown was absent because she was on vacation. Levy County Commission Chairman John Meeks jokingly directed a question toward her empty chair to hear Dr. Esler's quarterly report on matters

regarding Levy County Animal Services, because the report was not listed on the agenda.

Commissioners agreed to listen to the non-agenda report.



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While there was the tragic news about more cats potentially being euthanized in the near future due to them not being adopted, Dr. Esler's report showed Levy County Animal Services continuing on a strong positive trend toward taking care of the dogs, cats and other critters of the county.

Levy County has made excellent strides, especially in the past 12 years, to reduce the number of dogs and cats that must be killed.

In her quarterly report, she began with canines.

Twenty-one dogs were brought to the compound for low-cost clinic work during the quarter from April 1 through June 30. Low-cost spays and neuters will be made available to residents of Levy County who are of retirement age (older than 62 years) or low-income status (determined by eligibility for other types of government aid).

Eleven dogs were brought in as quarantine animals in that three-month period, Dr. Esler said. These are dogs that bit a person and were not up-to-date on their rabies shots.

There were 23 dogs that came into the shelter as strays, she said, and were transferred within the community. Another 85 were unwanted dogs, which are primarily owner releases.

Of those animals, 45 were adopted. Seven were euthanized. All seven dogs that were put to death were from among the 11 quarantined or aggressive animals, Dr. Esler said. Two dogs euthanized were puppies that were actually stillborn, she added. One dog that was hit by a car died on the way to the office after being picked up by Levy County Animal Services during that three-month period.

During that three months, there were also 133 dogs that were rescued, and 34 dogs were returned to owners.

As for cats, Dr. Esler said, there were 44 low-cost clinic visits.

People who are using the trap-neuter-release (TNR) program are also using the low-cost neuter program, because the TNR program has limits, Dr. Esler said she is happy to report.

She told the County Commission that Levy County Animal Services has seen some feral cat colonies being brought under control as a result of the program to stop cats from making kittens.

There were 168 stray cats that came into the Levy County Animal Services compound during that three-month period, she said. There were 44 cats in the TNR program. There were four cat transfers within the community, she said.

Four other cats in that three-month period were owner released.

Of the cats that came in, eight were adopted; three escaped (feral cats can get away from staff on occasion); 80 cats were rescued by other groups; one cat was euthanized for illness; two cats were stillborn; and 92 other cats (mostly feral) were euthanized in that three-month period, she said.

Dr. Esler said the cat population at Levy County Animal Services has reached a point again where euthanasia is going to occur.

County Commissioner Rock Meeks said an unknown person dropped off a cat at his house, and that cat has become part of his family now. Otherwise, Meeks said, he would

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adopt a cat from the county.

All animals that are adopted or rescued from the Levy County Animal Services are required by Florida Law to be Spay/Neutered and also have a rabies vaccination.

To adopt a male dog from the shelter the fee is \$40, which covers neutering, rabies vaccination (if age appropriate) and microchipping.

To adopt a female dog from the shelter the fee is \$55, which covers spaying, rabies vaccination (if age appropriate) and microchipping.

To adopt a male cat from the shelter the fee is \$25, which covers neutering, rabies vaccination (if age appropriate) and microchipping.

To adopt a female cat from the shelter the fee is \$40, which covers spaying, rabies vaccination (if age appropriate) and microchipping. Adoptions can be done Monday thru Friday between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Staff members encourage people to get there by 3:30 p.m. to give them time to complete the required paperwork. All adoptions are done on a first-come basis.

All transactions such as adoption, impounding, etc., are cash payment only – no checks or cards.

Click [HERE](#) to see the adoptable pets at Levy County Animal Services.

Anyone interested in adopting a cat or dog from Levy County Animal Services is invited to visit the dog and cat compound.

From Gainesville take State Road 24 westbound to Bronson then turn left on U.S. Alt. 27 (Hathaway Avenue) in Bronson.

From I-75 Ocala (Exit 354, old number 70 Ocala/Williston) Take 27 North to Williston take Alt. 27(27A North).

From U.S. Alt. 27 either coming from Bronson or Williston, go to Levy County Road 335 and turn down the road where the signs are pointing to the Animal Shelter.

Once on CR 335, go about 1/4 mile to Northeast 69th Lane and turn right. Follow the signs for Levy County Animal Services/Levy County Landfill. The shelter location is at the landfill.

The street address is 12055 N.E. 69th Lane, Bronson, Fla., however some GPS equipment does not take a person to the correct location.

The telephone number is 352-486-5138.

The email is animailservices@levycounty.org.

The main office hours are Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.