



CITY OF COLUMBIA/BOONE COUNTY, MISSOURI



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION OF ANIMAL CONTROL

June 21, 2010

City Prosecutor
600 E. Broadway
Columbia, MO

On March 15, 2010, I received an anonymous complaint regarding a woman that has numerous cats in a motel room at the Motel 6 on I-70 Drive S. E. Since the call came in at 5:00 p.m. that day I responded on March 16, 2010. When I went up to room 328 I could smell the strong odor of cat urine and filth. I knocked on the door and no one answered I left a hang tag and left. I went to the Health Department and asked if an Environmental Health Specialist had the ability to do a lodging inspection. I was told yes they inspect hotels and motels on a regular basis. The environmentalist assigned to this motel was Veronica Anderson.

Later that day Veronica accompanied me to the motel where we conducted an inspection of the room. We were allowed in by the motel owner. Once we were in the room we found numerous cats. It was hard to count the exact number because the cats were in constant motion and they all look similar. It was my best estimate that there were at least 17. The smell was overwhelming and some of the cats did not appear to be overly healthy. There was hardwood flooring and a tarp laid out over the hardwood instead of carpeting. I asked the maintenance man why the tarp was there, he told me it was to prevent the urine and feces from leaking through the floor and into the room below. I took photographs of the room to document the conditions.

On March 17, 2010, a person called our office and identified herself as Susan Kohler. Susan told me she had found the hang tag on the door of her motel room and was returning my call. I asked her about the cats and she told me this was

1005 W. Worley St. ♦ P.O. Box 6015 ♦ Columbia, Missouri 65205-6015
Phone: (573) 449-1888 ♦ TTY: (573) 874-7356 ♦ Fax: (573) 817-6407
www.GoColumbiaMo.com

only a temporary place to house the cats and she would be finding a better place to keep them. I explained the ordinances regarding odor, too many animals and rabies vaccinations. Susan assured me that all of her cats were current on all shots and they were receiving the best of care. I told her I would be checking back in a week to see if she had gotten her number of cats down to the legal number of 4.

On March 25, 2010, Susan Kohler called our office and told me that was leaving town on March 26, 2010 and taking her cats with her. I tried to ask her some questions about where she may be taking the cats which she refused to answer.

During the next few weeks I would drive into the parking lot of the motel to see if I could see cats sitting in the window of the motel room. During these visits I did not see any cats, and the management of the motel was less than happy to see me when I would come into the lobby to see if Susan had really left.

On June 14, 2010, our office received another anonymous complaint regarding too many cats at 1309 Stonehaven Dr. When we looked up to see who lived at this address it was listed to Charles Kohler. We were pretty sure we were once again dealing with Susan Kohler. I responded to the residence, there was no answer at the door. I left a hang tag requesting someone from the household to call me. As I was walking away from the house I noticed a black Cadillac parked in the driveway. The car was full of cat food, cat litter, animal crates and various medical supplies such as syringes and medications. The car was so full of items that the only place for a person to sit was in the driver's seat.

At 2:45 p.m. a person called our office and identified herself as Susan Kohler. I told her what the complaint was and asked her if she was the same Susan Kohler that I had talked to in March. She told me no there is more than one Susan Kohler in Columbia. I asked Susan how many cats she had at her residence and what breed of cats she owns. Susan told me she has 2 cats and they are Oriental Shorthairs. I told Susan the information she was giving me was leading me to believe she was the same Susan Kohler as the one I had talked to in March. I told her I needed her to either come to the Health Department or meet me somewhere so I could see her in person. I explained to Susan this would help me in the future to identify which one of the Susan's I was dealing with. Susan agreed to come to the Health Department. Susan arrived at the Health Department at approximately 3:30 p.m. Susan told me she did not have any form of identification with her but she verbally gave me her date of birth, Social Security number and phone number. Susan once again told me she was not the same Susan Kohler I talked to in March. Since I did not have any other evidence I just cautioned her on numbers and vaccinations. Susan was not very forth

coming with information and just kept telling me that she knew. During her visit to the Health Department I noticed Susan appeared to be unkempt and smelled like cat urine.

I followed Susan out of the Health Department to see what type of a car she was driving. Susan got into a grey Honda not a black Cadillac. When I went back to my office I compared the phone number Susan gave me to the phone number I was given in March they were the same number so I knew we were now dealing with the same Susan Kohler.

On June 15, 2010 at approximately 1:00 p.m. I received another anonymous call about too many cats at Motel 6 on I-70 Drive S. E. I responded to the motel where the desk clerk was less than happy to see me. I told him all I needed to do was to check room 328. He told me he would not allow me access to the room but I was free to go upstairs and stand outside of the door. When I went upstairs to the third floor I could smell the stench from room 328. Based on this observation and the information I had from March I decided to seek a search warrant.

I was able to obtain the warrant and our department executed the warrant on June 16, 2010 at 1:30 p.m. CPD entered the room for us with a room key provided by the motel owner. We were surprised to find Susan Kohler present. Susan was in the bathroom. We gave Susan several minutes before we went back in. Officer Deborah Christoff began photographing and video taping the scene. I was surprised to see how the conditions of the room had deteriorated since I was there in March. I requested Susan to come out of the bathroom, it took her a while but she finally came out. Susan wanted to know why we were there and what we were doing. I explained she had too many cats, the odor problem, lack of vaccinations and cruelty. Susan said she was leaving town tomorrow with her cats and we should just leave. I told Susan she had already told me this story before so therefore I could not trust her to be telling me the truth this time. I asked Susan why she had not been honest with me about her identity and the fact that she was the same Susan Kohler I had talked to in March she refused to answer. Susan remained pretty silent throughout the entire time we were there during our search and seizure. Susan would at times would ask me why we were doing this to her and she repeatedly begged to be allowed to keep at least one or two of the cats. Susan at one point accused the Animal Control Officers of being cruel. Susan had a couple of cats that are semi-feral and we had to use a ketch pole in order to catch them for transport. Susan felt we were being cruel. I asked her if she could catch them and place them in crates for us and she told me she could but she was not willing to do so. I told Susan she could spare her cats of what she felt was cruel if she would assist us but she once again refused. There were times when Susan was observed putting cats under her shirt

trying to hide them. Susan was also observed shoving cats in the dresser drawers in the motel room hoping we would not see her doing this and possibly leave one behind. Once Susan figured out we were not going to leave the premises until all the cats were impounded she left the motel. I was able to issue Susan one summons for too many animals before she left. Susan signed the summons as requested.

During our search of the room we found 4 deceased kittens 3 were in the freezer compartment of the motel room refrigerator. The last one was in a urine soaked crate. All of the crates were completely urine soaked. The bed (mattresses) was yellow and soaked with urine. There was vomit and feces all over the room. The walls of the room were yellow with streaks of urine running down the walls from where cats had sprayed. There was no food or water present. The bowls that were provided for this purpose were full of feces and urine.

The tarp on the floor was covered in feces and urine therefore, it was easy to determine why the tarp was placed over the hardwood. Had it not been there I am sure the urine would have soaked through the floor to the room below. While I was in the room I noticed my shoes became sticky on the bottom from walking through the feces and urine. Officer Brandon Anderson went down to the 2nd floor and he said he could smell the stench down there. All of the Animal Control Officers that assisted in the search and seizure complained about sore throats for several days from breathing in the noxious air in the room.

After we left the motel with the cats we took them to the Central Humane Society (CMHS) for processing. The cats were photographed, cataloged (see photos) and vaccinated for FVRCP. We submitted veterinary check ups for almost every cat (these are enclosed in the binder with their impound card and photo). Most of the cats were dehydrated due to lack of water (none present in room). Almost of them had upper respiratory infections (uri) which they are being treated for. I have also enclosed a total inventory of the animals with a brief description it does not give specific colors since the colors vary so much.

On June 21, 2010 I was contacted by Dr. Janet Lee staff veterinarian for Central Missouri Humane Society. Dr. Lee said the three small kittens taken during the impoundment were in critical condition. Dr. Lee was trying to make the difficult decision of what to do with the kittens. I turned them over to CMHS so that Dr. Lee could make a professional decision on what would be best for these kittens.

We were also notified on June 22, 2010, that some of these cats have tested positive for feline leukemia. I have also enclosed some information on Feline Leukemia. As you will read you should note that since this is contagious all of the cats most likely suffer from this illness.

Since the word has gotten out about the cats I have received calls from several cat breeders from all over the United States. These breeders are willing to take in these cats and have connections to rescue groups that would more than happy to assist in their care. I will also be submitting a bill from CMHS for services they have provided. I have also been told that this is not the first time that Susan Kohler has been under investigation for animal cruelty. I am still following up on a lead from the Saint Louis area where she was found to have had numerous cats and some of them were found deceased. It is my understanding that Missouri Department of Agriculture has possibly counseled her about her cats.

As I get this information I will forward it to you as supplementals.

On June 21, 2010, I issued Susan Kohler 3 more summonses. One for failure to vaccinate, one for failure to keep her structure clean and one for animal abuse.

Please prosecute Susan Kohler for the above mentioned violations. If she is found guilty I would like to request that the Judge allow us access to any and all residences that Susan Kohler resides at during reasonable times to inspect for numbers and condition and of her animals.

Molly Aust
Animal Control Supervisor