



Oakland Police Department

Howard A. Jordan
Acting Chief of Police

For Additional Information:

Officer Jeff Thomason
Public Information Officer
Ph. 510.238.7230

For Immediate Release

Oakland Woman Charged with Two Counts of Felony Animal Abuse More than 15 Cats Severely Injured

OAKLAND – After months of joint investigation by the Oakland Police Department’s Oakland Animal Services (OAS) and the Crime Investigation Division (CID), La Preda Thomas of Oakland was arraigned on Friday, October 9, on two felony counts of animal abuse charged by the Alameda County District Attorney’s office. Thomas is accused of severely injuring more than 15 cats and kittens in incidents dating back to 2006.

Thomas became known to Oakland Animal Services and several animal rescue groups in 2006 when numerous times she was found with cats or kittens she claimed to have “rescued” that had serious and unusual injuries, ranging from multiple broken limbs to huge puncture wounds to a severely injured eye. Many of these cats also had their claws crudely cut off, sometimes with portions of their toes removed. In one case, in 2007, OAS seized a group of kittens from Thomas’ residence that had been left in a cage in the hot sun with no water. Upon further examination, it was discovered that two of the kittens each had a front leg that was completely broken in half in almost identical locations.

OAS learned from CID that Thomas was on probation for burglary. Terms of her probation included a search of her residence. OAS requested and participated in a search of the home this past July and again in September. In the first search, OAS and the search team rescued three kittens; almost every limb of each of these kittens had a fresh or healing break or fracture. The second search of her home revealed an injured female cat and her kitten; the mom had a badly broken front leg and shattered hip that probably will need surgery. These cats are all healing and safe, thanks to the Montclair Veterinary Clinic, which donated all of the many radiographs needed to charge the case, and to Island Cat Resources, which assisted in finding the victims loving foster homes.

Experienced OAS veterinarian Dr. Jyothi Robertson says, “As a veterinarian, this is the first time I have seen so many severely malnourished animals with similar fractures coming from a single person claiming to be a rescuer.”

Despite the number of injured cats rescued from Thomas, she denied hurting any of the animals, claiming only that she specifically looks for injured cats to rescue, trapping or grabbing them in the community. OAS located a resident who had given kittens to Thomas. This person stated that the kittens were healthy, normal, and active before she gave them to Thomas. These same kittens were later found at Thomas’ residence. One was dead; the other’s front legs were both shattered, and he had pneumonia secondary to several broken ribs.

Thomas remains in custody awaiting a preliminary hearing.

Megan Webb, the director of Oakland Animal Services since April, says that one of her main priorities in her new role as director is to prosecute serious cases of animal abuse and neglect in the city. “Animal

abuse is a crime and should be treated as such,” she says. “I’ve been so impressed with the support and assistance we have received from the police department on these cases.”

This is the third felony animal-abuse case that OAS has helped to charge since Webb became director. The first was a cock fighting case where more than 150 roosters were seized. The third involved an 18-year-old man who is accused of having slashed the throat of his neighbor’s cat on two separate occasions. He remains on a psychiatric hold until he is transferred to Santa Rita jail.

For additional information about the Thomas case or to schedule a time to photograph any of the rescued cats, contact Megan Webb, Director, Oakland Animal Services, 510-535-5604, www.oaklandanimalservices.org.

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