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Rescue group to keep pets seized from shelter

Dave Munday Jun 21, 2011

A local animal-rescue group will keep the 76 dogs and cats it seized from the Williamsburg County animal shelter earlier this month, a judge decided Monday.

But Animal Rescue & Relief of Charleston is not satisfied and will push for a state investigation into how the animals were treated, Executive Director Michelle Reid said Tuesday.

She said all the animals were sick and provided graphic photographs of cats with pus oozing from their eyes and dogs in cages with feces. Eight of the animals have died since they were taken June 7, Reid said.

Many of the animals were in bad shape before they came to the shelter in Kingstree, Williamsburg County Attorney Billy Jenkinson said Tuesday.

The county is building a new shelter that should open by the end of the year, he said. Magistrate William Driggers ordered the county to pay the group \$5,000 toward the cost of caring for the animals and to give the group medicine for them.

The judge said the shelter can keep operating if the county updates equipment, gives the workers more training and allows a local veterinarian to inspect the shelter weekly, Reid said. The board will consider whether to appeal that decision, board President Wayne McKenzie said in a statement Tuesday.

The county and the shelter's board of directors had been butting heads over conditions at the shelter for several months. Eventually the county terminated an agreement that allowed the board to oversee the operations of the shelter. That's when the board called on the rescue group for help.

The board and rescue group are pushing to be part of a new council-appointed committee that will oversee the shelter, according to Reid. Charleston attorney Francis Ervin is representing the rescue group.