Officials cite 'neglect'

Carhart's horses confiscated

By EUGENE CURTIN

Four of 11 horses owned by Dr. LeRoy Carhart were confiscated from a fenced-in field Tuesday afternoon after officials with the Town and Country Humane Society decided the animals were neglected.

Two dogs that were roaming the property also were confiscated.

Judy Johnson, president of the Papillon-based humane society, said she was considering neglect charges against Carhart, a Bellevue physician who attracted controversy recently after opening an abortion clinic in Olds Towne.

Johnson said the humane society received an anonymous tip about a week and a half prior to the confiscation that the animals were being neglected. The horses were kept in a field on a farm belonging to Carhart. Carhart does not live on the farm and was not present Tuesday during the confiscation. He was also not told that the horses were about to be removed.

During the ten days following the anonymous tip, Johnson said she tried to call Carhart several times and succeeded only once in reaching his wife, Mary Lou. Johnson said Mrs. Carhart told her the horses were adequately cared for.

Neither Dr. Carhart nor Mrs. Carhart could be reached for comment on the confiscation.

But Johnson said she received a call from Dr. Carhart Wednesday morning from Wisconsin. She said he was upset.

"He's certainly not happy," she said. "He's having his vet stop out here today. He says he's going to sue and do all those kind of things. I would prefer to do this through education without going into court, but if we must go to court, I'm willing."

Carhart's veterinarian is Dr. Lowell Smallley. Three separate messages left at his office seeking information on his interpretation of the horses' health were not answered.

According to Johnson, humane society officers visited Carhart's farm site about four times after receiving the anonymous complaint. She said they found hay provided just once, even though several large bales lay just outside the fence beyond the reach of the horses.

Johnson said the hay was of inferior quality and that Plattsmouth veterinarian Dr. Larry Snuckey was asked to check the horses out.

According to Johnson, Snuckey returned a report that four of the older horses needed care.

Snuckey, however, declined comment on his role in the proceedings.

Five humane society officers arrived at the field, located at 14610 Dyson Hollow Road, at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday and began rounding up the four horses.

The horses, two brown and two white, appeared to be in various states of neglect. One of the brown horses did not seem to be severely underfed. Johnson said it was in need of some extra food but was the healthiest of the four.

The two white horses both appeared thin, with their rib cages visible. Johnson said they were older horses and pointed to bite marks on their backs that she said were caused by...
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younger horses forcing them away from what food was
made available.

The fourth horse, estimated to be a 25- to 30-year-old
Arab female, was clearly in bad shape with rib cage pro-
truding and bones stark against her skin.

Johnson estimated that the confiscated horses ranged in
age from their mid-teens to their late 20s.

Johnson said the remaining seven horses were consid-
ered well enough to be left alone.

Three of the targeted horses were calm and were round-
ed up with ease. The fourth horse, the brown Arab female,
had to be scared from a concrete barn structure which
Johnson said provided shelter for the horses.

The horse was the only one of the 11 animals to remain
in the barn. The barn was about a foot deep in what appeared
to be mud and excrement, as a humane society officer
waded in and forced the horse out.

For all its apparent malnourishment, the horse showed
no lack of energy, leading four officers on a 15-minute chase
around the ride before giving in and being loaded into a
trailer with the other horses.

Johnson said she had not secured a warrant to confiscate
the horses, acting instead because she believed it to be a mat-
ter of life and death. Johnson said state statutes allow her
to act without a warrant if an animal is in imminent danger
of death.

"That one," she said, pointing to the thin brown horse,
"That one is the one that will die if we don't take action now.
The vet said she must either be put on a special diet or else
be put down."

Sarpy County Attorney Michael Wellman said Johnson's
interpretation of state statutes is correct.

"It's much like a police officer," he said. "If they see a
crime in progress they don't have to secure a warrant to con-
front a property. It's her job. She decided a crime was
ongoing and so confiscated the horses."

The confiscation is the latest in a series of events that
have propelled Carhart into the public eye.

On Sept. 7 last year, a barn on the same property burned
down, killing 17 show horses owned by Carhart.

Carhart attracted controversy this year after moving his
abortion clinic from Omaha to Bellevue. Local anti-abor-
tion groups have picketed the clinic.