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The lost menagerie

By: Michelle Miller, Journal Staff Writer

A horse, a donkey, two llamas, two goats, a sheep, two potbellied pigs, three geese, a turkey, 10 chickens, a parrot, a cockatiel and a cat were among the menagerie of animals left behind by a Lincoln man who died last week.

Bill Allen was known as the local "Dr. Dolittle," caring for more than two dozen animals on his five-acre parcel in rural Lincoln. After he died Friday of natural causes, his beloved creatures have now found a temporary home at the Placer County Animal Shelter.

"We don't usually receive that many exotic animals from one source," said Animal Control Manager Mike Winters. "Especially ones that have been this well cared for."

Animal control staff members are currently trying to locate Allen's next of kin to see if they are interested in taking the animals. Policy dictates livestock be kept in protective custody for 14 days. If Allen's relatives pass on the opportunity to take in a virtual petting zoo of animals, they will be up for adoption.

"We're taking applications to adopt them now and will do the screening if they need homes," Winters said. "We'll find the best homes and people who know what they're getting into. Not everyone can take in a potbelly pig or a llama. We don't want (the animals) to end up on the Thanksgiving table, either."

The horse, for instance, is old and blind and needs pasture space to be a companion animal. Pigs need a place to stay cool in the hot summers. The female llama needs an owner who can dodge projectile saliva.

"She spits," Winters said. "She can go 20 feet."

Out of concern for the animals' well-being, staff from Animal Services wrangled them last week to transport the creatures to the Auburn shelter.

The animals were herded on the Lincoln property into a chute that guided them onto trailers, all while it was hailing during last weekend's storm. It took three animal control officers and three staff members six



Two geese are among the 26 animals that Placer County Animal Shelter took custody of last week. Owner Bill Allen died last week of natural causes, and his heirs are currently being sought to see if they want the 26 animals on his Lincoln property. Photo by Karina Williams/Auburn Journal

In the Know: Caring for pets past death

If you are concerned about your pet's care when you go to the great hereafter, you're not alone.

Some estimates say 12 percent of people put their pets in their wills to secure their beloved pooch or kitty's well being.

There are plenty of media accounts of pet owners who leave it all to their four-legged friends.

In 2003, an elderly woman who befriended a stray cat named Tinker left the cat \$173,000 and a \$600,000 north London house to live in. A beagle-mix named Rocky came with the house a Missouri couple bought after Rocky's elderly owners moved into a nursing home that wouldn't take dogs.

Actress Betty White reportedly has a will that leaves her \$5 million estate for the benefit of her pets. Oprah Winfrey's will reportedly dictates that her dog be well taken care of after the media mogul is

hours and several trips on two trailers to transport all the animals.

The goats were particularly slippery.

"They were very fast. They'd cut a certain way, so I had to just grab and tackle them," said Animal Care Supervisor Cindy Leonard, who assisted with the task. "These animals knew where to go (to evade us). They knew the property much better than we did."

They also conducted a room-by-room search for a domestic cat inside the house, which was eventually found hiding inside a sofa.

The animals are now inside pens at the Auburn shelter. One llama shares her pen with "pasture buddies" the goats, named Mischief and Mary, and the sheep, which is called Barbarosa.

Luckily, there were enough livestock pens at the Placer County Animal Shelter to hold the influx of animals.

"We want to build a new facility in Auburn and put a barn and indoor paddock for just these cases," Winters said.

Unlike other cases, where animals come to the shelter after being abused or neglected, these animals were well taken care of. But Winters said it does raise an issue for pet owners who should make decisions in advance should they no longer be able to care for their animals.

"What we can learn from this is that people should arrange for their pets if they can, just as they would for surviving relatives," Winters said. "In the case of an emergency where you're incapacitated, make sure you leave information on a relative or a person to contact (to look after pets)."

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gone. And singer Dusty Springfield stipulated in her will that her cat Nicholas' bed be lined with her nightgown and that her songs be played at the cat's bedtime each night. Even Disney's animated film "The Aristocats" revolved around an elderly woman who left a fortune to her cat Duchess and her three kittens. Her butler, however, tries to foil her wishes and take off with the inheritance.

According to www.estateplanningforpets.org, legally, a pet animal is considered tangible personal property, like your car, your furniture, or your jewelry. Upon death, your pets go to your heirs or beneficiaries who are entitled to receive such property.

Although estate planners have traditionally overlooked pets, largely because courts were hesitant to reward money or property to a non-human entity, California and several other states have laws allowing pet owners to set up trusts for animals.

According to a survey of pet lawyers by LawyersWeeklyUSA, the average amount left is \$25,000.

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