

## Cat Hoarder Pleads Guilty

**Maryland woman was found living with more than 300 cats.**

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The trial of a Maryland woman cat hoarder charged with animal cruelty abruptly ended this week when she agreed to plead guilty to 46 misdemeanor counts of neglect.

Patricia Nicholson, 51, of Mount Airy, withdrew her not guilty plea and submitted an Alford plea Sept. 26, nine months after 119 live cats and 184 dead cats were found in her home. In an Alford plea, a defendant doesn't admit guilt but admits there's enough evidence to produce a guilty verdict.

In return for her guilty plea, prosecutors dropped 76 other counts of neglect and 122 misdemeanor counts of inflicting unnecessary pain and suffering.

Nicholson entered the plea midway through the first day of testimony during her trial in Frederick County District Court.

Presiding Judge O. John Cejka set sentencing for Nov. 29. Nicholson faces a maximum penalty of 11 years and four months behind bars plus a \$46,000 fine.

The Maryland State Attorney's office has recommended a suspended jail sentence and three years of supervised probation, provided that Nicholson gets psychiatric treatment and doesn't acquire or care for more animals.

On Dec. 16, 2005, Nicholson was found living in a house with 303 cats, 46 of whom had to be euthanized, according to court records and trial testimony.