

## Cruelty Charges Filed Against Cat Rescue

**Nevada FLOCK facility faces 18 misdemeanor counts of animal cruelty.**

*By Stacy N. Hackett*

Posted: June 9, 2008 2 a.m. EDT

Last summer, animal rescue workers were called in to care for more than 800 cats kept in poor conditions at the FLOCK (For the Love of Cats and Kittens) facility in Pahrump, Nev. Volunteers and workers from Best Friends Animal Society spent nearly a year caring for cats that were malnourished, dehydrated, sick and wary of humans. Now, Bob Beckett, the Nevada district attorney, has filed 18 misdemeanor counts of animal cruelty against FLOCK and unnamed officers, directors, employees and volunteers.

The specific law under which FLOCK was charged prohibits anyone from depriving an animal of necessary food, drink or medical care, abandoning an animal, or engaging in an act of cruelty against an animal. The misdemeanor counts each carry a maximum penalty of six months in jail, 120 hours of community service and a fine of \$1,000.

The counts name FLOCK itself but not specific people associated with the organization. "We're taking our time," Beckett said, "trying to separate those who had knowledge of the conditions from those who were on the board in name only. We're trying to do the right thing ... We want to be thorough."

The first 17 counts against FLOCK are each tied to individual cats found at the facility, identified by the number assigned to them by Best Friends. The remaining count refers in general to an additional 300 cats found at the facility.

Russ Mead, Best Friends general counsel, has worked closely with the Nevada district attorney's office since the animal welfare organization first arrived in Pahrump. Mead described the conditions at FLOCK as an institutionalized hoarding situation. "One of the lessons from this animal hoarding case is that we all need to be vigilant about the animal welfare and animal rescue organizations we support," he said. "The horrible aspect of this crime is that it was done systematically to such a large number of cats by people hiding under the umbrella of a nonprofit [organization]."