

Kitten Hoax Lights Up Animal Control Hotline

Cat in a basket that was lifted 300 feet by helium-filled balloons turns out to be a plush toy.

Alternative radio station X103.9-FM in San Bernardino, Calif., pulled a prank that left animal lovers and animal control officials irate. Listeners tuning in to the station on May 11 heard what the stations on-air morning personalities said was a 4-month-old kitten being placed in a basket and lifted 300 feet in the air by attached helium balloons. The announcement spurred hundreds of phone calls to the station from dismayed listeners and animal control agencies in the county. But it all turned out to be a hoax. The kitten in the basket was actually a plush toy and by 10:30 a.m., the basket was back at the station office. Sue Hoak, the operations manager for San Bernardino Animal Control, said the agency's emergency hotline was tied up for hours with calls from listeners and from other animal control agencies during the time the prank was unfolding. Afterward, one of the morning shows co-hosts, Jen Carr, said that the outpouring of support for the cat and anger against the deejays during the hoax was overwhelming, and that it was doubtful that such a prank would be tried again. Posted: May 15, 2006, 5:00 a.m. EST