

## Court Awards Custody of Cats to County

**In a landmark case, a judge transferred ownership of 114 cats seized from an animal-hoarding situation to Nye County.**

September 5, 2007 5 a.m. EDT

Nye County officials charged Sherri Allen with 120 counts of animal cruelty and removed 114 cats from her home in Pahrump, Nev., in late July. These cats resided at the Nye County animal control facility as staff and volunteers from Best Friends Animal Society provided care.

Last week, after hearing testimony about the symptoms of animal hoarding and viewing photographic evidence of the state of Allen's home, a judge awarded permanent ownership of the cats to Nye County. The county then transferred ownership of the cats—along with three degu, two ferrets, two desert lizards, two rabbits and two dogs—to Best Friends Animal Society, allowing society staff to move the cats to the Best Friends sanctuary in Utah.

Five cats were immediately given veterinary certificates by county veterinarians, enabling them to be flown directly to the sanctuary for special care. The remaining 109 cats will travel by a specially outfitted 24-foot, climate-controlled rescue truck to the sanctuary, where staff will work to find good homes for them.

The landmark case provides a precedent for other counties faced with institutionalized animal-hoarding situations, according to Russ Mead, Best Friends legal counsel.