

Prison Superintendent Bans Pet Cats

The decision at a women's correctional facility in Vermont has upset some inmates.

Posted: January 30, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

A new superintendent at the Southeast State Correctional Facility in Vermont is ending a cat care program that has existed at the prison for about 20 years.

"It is not a physical plant that is conducive to a pet program. I know a lot of the inmates consider them pets, but they aren't really," Superintendent Anita Carbonell said.

Cats have been fixtures at the farm-turned-prison since the 1980s, and Carbonell's decision to involuntarily parole the cats has upset some of the inmates who raise and nurture the animals, as well as people outside the facility who support the prison cat care program.

Sue Skaskiw, director of the Vermont Volunteer Services for Animals Humane Society, told the Associated Press that taking the cats away "is unnecessary and insensitive to their situation."

Although the prison cat care program has support, there have been problems; some inmates have been scratched in the past and some are either allergic to cats or do not like them.

The prison started giving away the cats in December, first making sure that they were spayed or neutered and current on immunizations. About six have been placed in new homes so far.