

SPCA Raids Third Puppy Mill

By Sheila Kunick
Staff Writer

CANTON—For the third time in less than five months the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and the Van Zandt County Sheriff's Office have taken animals from unhealthy conditions in the county.

The SPCA, in conjunction with the Van Zandt County Sheriff's Office, rescued 26 cats, 37 dogs and 22 Barbado sheep, one rabbit and two wolf hybrids from owner Linda Williams, 49, who lives east of Canton near Ben Wheeler in the 400 block of Van Zandt County Road 4105, on July 1 from what is being called a cat and puppy mill.

Dogs were in cramped cages and a mobile home located at the

back of the house had many cats in small areas. The filth in the mobile home and the stench in the area was overwhelming.

Most of the cats and dogs lived in small, cramped cages, coated in filth and many of the animals were emaciated.

Williams was not home at the initial arrival of the SPCA and county officials, but arrived at the home about two hours later. Most of the animals were already taken from the cages and placed in the SPCA transport vehicles.

Upon arrival Williams had no comment to media, but did release two dogs, that were in the home, to the SPCA.

A hearing has been scheduled for Friday, July 9 at 9:30 a.m. at the Precinct 2 Courthouse at 250 Grove Street in Canton, with

Justice of the Peace Ronnie Daniell presiding.

Williams could be charged with animal cruelty.

If the SPCA is awarded custody of the animals, the cats and dogs will be spayed or neutered, and made available for adoption, along with the sheep and the rabbit. The wolf hybrids will go to a sanctuary.

No evidence was found that Williams sold any of the animals that she owned. She was not a vendor at any location.

"During my 20 years experience I have found that these people do not care, they are there to make a dollar. This is standard neglect and abuse that I have witnessed at these puppy mills. This one also bred cats," said SPCA's Vice President of

Humane Law Enforcement Dave Garcia.

"I have taken animals that need medical attention, I've seen here animals living in their own feces, I didn't see much food out this morning, and what was out was moldy and wet," he said. "I saw animals not protected from the environment. The kittens were soaked from the rain last night. Many of the animals have hair loss and there are open red sores on some of the dogs. Some of the dogs have so many ticks in their ears that it feels like sandpaper."

Garcia went on to say, "I am sure that some animals have perished here, unknown to law enforcement and to us. I am sure that these animals have been

See ANIMALS, Page 4A