

Criminal probe into Collegetown cats' deaths

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(Photo: Provided Photo)

Eight feral cats have died and more cats are also believed to be affected after eating dry cat food that had been laced with ethylene glycol, or anti-freeze, in Collegetown.

One cat was found dead Thursday afternoon and a second cat had to be euthanized Thursday, said Jim Bouderau, executive director of the Tompkins County SPCA.

A dish with dry cat food mixed with a clear substance, later determined to be ethylene glycol, was found this week and is believed to be the cause of the cat deaths.

The SPCA is conducting a criminal investigation, Bouderau said Thursday. Anyone with information should contact investigators at (607) 319-5067.

A mother cat and a kitten were found dead this week. Three other bottle-feeding kittens were taken to Cornell University for monitoring after being found, but they seem fine, Bouderau said previously. Another female cat with milder symptoms is recovering at Cornell.

The feral cat colony near Linden Avenue is made up of about 20-30 cats, Bouderau said. He expects other cats may be affected but SPCA officials have been unable to collect some of the suspected ill cats because they won't let humans near them.

Traps have been placed in the area to help catch the cats, and that is how one of the cats was discovered Thursday.

SPCA officials are visiting the area several times a day to try to check on the remaining cats. That will continue for several weeks.

Symptoms of the poisoning can take up to 72 hours to develop, Bouderau said.

While there is no new evidence of contamination, pet owners in the Collegetown area should try to keep their cats indoors or make sure they're supervised when outdoors, Bouderau said.

Anyone concerned that their pets might have been exposed should look for signs of profuse drooling, tremors and unusual amounts of urination. The Cornell University Hospital for Animals offers 24-hour emergency service at 930 Campus Road in Ithaca. Call 253-3060 for more information.

Staff writer Kelsey O'Connor contributed to this report.