

Georgetown fire: Vets tended to pets

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Wednesday, January 10, 2007 - Updated: 10:49 AM EST

Just one day after a massive blaze destroyed 24 units at the Longview at Georgetown apartment complex last Wednesday, Jan. 3, every one of the 18 pets that had been rescued by the Muddy Paws Animal Care Center in Rowley had been reunited with his or her family, Muddy Creek's Dr. Ray Cahill-Morasco said Friday.

Given the center's close proximity to the site of the fire, staff from Muddy Creek were already on their way to the scene when the Red Cross called to request use of their site for the rescued animals.

"[Muddy Creek Manager] Elayne Reynolds saw the helicopters and heard the sirens, so she headed over on her own to see if there was anything we could do," said Cahill-Morasco.

While there, Reynolds ran into Georgetown and Boxford Animal Control Officer Helen Phillips, with whom she teamed up to get the rescue effort under way.

Of the 18 animals taken to Muddy Creek — including cats and dogs and one rabbit — only one pet, a cat, was in seriously critical condition.

Smudge, a domestic short hair, was rushed to Essex County Veterinary Emergency Hospital to be treated for hypothermia and smoke inhalation, said Dr. Sheila Bennett of the emergency hospital.

Bennett described Smudge's treatment.

"We warmed him up and gave him an inhaler, much like we would do with people, to dilate the airways. And we also gave him oxygen therapy and intravenous fluids," said Bennett.

"He's responded really well," she said, one day after the fire. Bennett said his condition was life threatening when he arrived.

"When he was first presented to Muddy Creek he was very cold and not very responsive, and he was still significantly hypothermic and that is very serious for a cat," she said.

According to Muddy Creek doctors, most of the animals taken in after the fire were cold, wet and covered in soot. Dr. Cahill-Morasco gave each rescued animal a physical examination following the fire.

Also on hand were volunteers from other InTown Veterinary Group hospitals in Woburn and North Andover.

As reported on georgetownrecord.com the day of the fire, Donna Lay, who had lived in the burned Building 7, had not been able to locate her large orange Maine coon cat, Tobey. Dr. Cahill-Morasco said no cats matching Tobey's description had been brought into Muddy Creek as of last Friday. He had not heard whether Lay had been found Tobey as of Friday.

After two days of emergency treatment, Smudge was reunited with the Mahoney family last Friday.



A Boxford firefighter towels off a chocolate lab rescued from the building last Wednesday.
(Nicole Goodhue Boyd)