

## Rescue Farm in Berne Shut Down After Owner Accused of Cruelty, Neglect

By H. Rose Schneider | May 12, 2017



— Photo from the Albany County Sheriff's Office  
Horses gaze at the camera at an animal rescue operation in Berne Wednesday.

BERNE — A rescue service is now empty of animals, after the horses, goats, sheep, and pigs were taken away due to an investigation into a cruelty case.

Linda Mellin, 45, of Berne, was charged on Wednesday with eight counts of failure to provide sustenance, all misdemeanors, according to a release from the Albany County Sheriff's Office.

The Sheriff's Office executed a search warrant of the property at 745 Sickle Hill Road after News Channel 13 received an anonymous tip that there were animals on the property living in inadequate conditions. The three-acre property, with "manufactured housing," a two-car garage and shed, is owned by Linda Cushing and has a full market value of \$86,719, according to the Albany County Assessment Rolls.

The investigation found animals living without food, water, or adequate shelter, said the report; in total, three horses, five pigs, five sheep, seventeen goats, approximately fifteen chickens, four canines, and two felines.

According to Chief Deputy William M. Rice, the address is an animal rescue service known as D&W Farm and Animal Rescue.

Dr. Carlin Jones, VMD, of the Equine Clinic at OakenCroft, assisted in the investigation, said Rice. The animals are now being kept at Camp Pinnacle in Voorheesville until Mellin's trial. Should Mellin not be able to keep her animals, they will be put up for adoption, said Rice.

It initially appeared the five pigs were not wanted by anyone, and there had been plans to put up the pigs at Albany County's jail, said Rice. However, upon hearing the news, someone reached out to the Sheriff's Office and agreed to take the pigs to a farm.



— Photo from the Albany County Sheriff's Office  
*An aerial view of D&W Farm and Animal Rescue on Sickie Hill Road in Berne.*

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Mellin was released on an appearance ticket, said Rice. She is due to appear in Berne Town Court on May 23.

The Enterprise attempted to call Mellin on a phone number listed under D&W Farm and Animal Rescue, but it was no longer in service. An email was sent to an address associated with the business, but The Enterprise has not yet received a response.

Two years ago, Mellin had been arrested by a sheriff's deputy for assault by recklessly causing physical injury, and for acting in a manner that could injure a minor under 17, both misdemeanors, according to The Enterprise's records. Mellin's dog ran onto a neighbor's property and bit a 13-year-old child. Mellin restrained the dog, but then attempted to punch the child's parent, hitting someone else instead, the arrest report showed. She was arraigned at Berne Town Court and released on her own recognizance.

Hoarding, including animal hoarding, is recognized as a mental illness in The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. According to Tufts University's Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium, animal hoarding is specifically defined as having more than a typical number of companion animals, failure to provide even minimum standards of care to these animals and denying that failure, and persistence in accumulation and control of these animals.

Anyone looking to assist with fostering the animals may contact the Sheriff's Office at (518)765-2351.

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