

## **‘Heartbreaking’ abandonment case prosecuted by RSPCA** *Fourteen cats left to starve to death; only one survived*

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In one of the worst cases of abandonment RSPCA South Australia Inspectors have seen, a Woodville West woman was yesterday convicted of aggravated animal cruelty for abandoning 14 cats, of which all but one had starved to death.

The defendant had left her property leaving behind 14 cats in her house without food or water. When Inspectors arrived at the property in September 2015, they discovered the remains of 13 cats, and just one cat still alive.

Andrea Lewis, Chief Inspector, says it was a heartbreaking case that will remain with RSPCA staff for a long time.

“When RSPCA Inspectors arrived at the property, the one surviving cat, completely emaciated, was crying out for us to hurry up and open the door. The remains of the other 13 cats were spread throughout the house. It was a devastating sight.”

The defendant had failed to attend numerous court appearances and as such was remanded in custody on 7 November 2016. Yesterday she was sentenced in the Port Adelaide Magistrates Court, where her mental health issues were taken into consideration. She was convicted and handed a ban on owning animals.

The one surviving cat, who staff had named “Trooper”, was fully rehabilitated in RSPCA South Australia’s care and adopted in March this year.

Ms Lewis says pet owners have a legal obligation under the Animal Welfare Act to care for their pets, and if they are no longer able to do so, there are many options open to owners for rehoming.

“If you can no longer care for your pets, ask friends, families or neighbours. Call your local council, or take them to an animal shelter like RSPCA South Australia or AWL,” she said.

“You simply cannot abandon animals; you have a legal responsibility for their wellbeing. It should never come to this. ”