

New Program Hopes to Curb Rising Animal Abuse by College Students

by Lauren Lanning

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EUGENE, Ore. — On Monday, the City of Eugene Animal Rights headquarters held a news conference to announce a new program, Animal Alert. Greenville Humane Society and City of Eugene Animal Services hope to bring awareness to the proper care of pets. The program hopes to end animal abuse committed by college students in the Eugene area.

Greenhill Humane Society will help students find temporary caregivers for their pets. Animal Alert will provide a hotline where city residents can report suspected abuse by college students. The program will also provide free monthly training sessions to teach students how to properly care for their pets.

"We are committing \$100,000 to launch this program. We are also looking to advertise at UO sporting events in the fall," said Maurice Plaza, marketing director, City of Eugene Animal Services.

There has been a large increase in animal abuse towards pets by college students. Since Jan. 1, 2024, there have already been 9 reports of dog cruelty perpetrated by UO students; there were only 5 cases reported in 2023.

Executive director of the Greenhill Humane Society, Hilda Rome, said, "Our new program, Animal Alert, is intended to help students who may be facing challenges both as pet owners and as students. We can make their lives and their pets' lives better."

Plaza acknowledges college students' busy lives, but Animal Alert supporters do not excuse that. Plaza said, "We understand students have busy lives, but that does not excuse any negligence when it comes to the treatment of animals they have as pets. This campaign will ideally remind pet owners—especially pet owners who are students—that animals have rights."

The news conference drew about 35 people in. The attendees included residents of Eugene, and students from the University of Oregon who are pet owners.

UO student and dog owner, Ben Barnett said, "I support the efforts of Animal Services and Greenhill, but I also suspect some students might not take the warnings seriously... The test of this campaign is if fewer cases of dog abuse follow."