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LOCAL
Benefit scheduled for local youthful leukemia patient.
A3

SPORTS
U.P. All-Star game shuts down.
A13

Good morning,
Kenneth Swanson!
Thank you for subscribing to the EagleHerald

DEATHS
BUSHMAKER, Donna R.
KONKEL, Joseph P.
NELSON, Kenneth A.
SZAPA, Arlene
WILLIAMS, John

More on A5

TODAY'S WEATHER

HIGH LOW
81 | 56

Partly cloudy, hot and humid with light winds.

More on A16

Advice.....A10-A11
Classified A7-A8
Comics A10, A12
Crossword A10
Deaths/ObitsA5
OpinionA4
Records.....A5
Sudoku..... A10
Sports A13-15

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EAGLEHERALD/ERIN NOHA
Melissa Ruid, operations manager at the Menominee Animal Shelter, stands with Queen, a pitbull mix available for adoption. Those who are looking to adopt can fill out an application online or stop into the shelter for a paper application at N184 Haggerson Court, Menominee.

Tri-cities grapple with limited resources for cats and dogs

Backlogged waiting list at the animal shelter

ERIN NOHA
EagleHerald Staff Writer

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second in a 3-part series on pet owners and veterinarian care in the area. Part 2 examines the relationships between police departments, the animal shelter and veterinarians. Part one was about the lack of capacity. Part three will run on Friday.

MENOMINEE — The Menominee Police Department hasn't

VETS & PETS

had an animal control officer in 15 years.

"We do the best we can

with what we have," said Justin Hofer, Menominee police chief.

With no plans to hire one now, they work through a contract with the Menominee Animal Shelter to ensure cats and dogs have a place to go. They also encourage people to bring any friendly animals they find to the shelter.

Resources for cats and dogs are available but less prevalent in the tri-cities than in bigger cities.

More VETS | A2

Vets/from A1

Currently, the area has three vets, Bayshore Veterinary Clinic in Menominee, Town & Country Veterinary Clinic in Marinette and the Peshtigo Veterinary Clinic. None are accepting new clients.

The animal shelter is currently working off a waiting list for cats and dogs. They have litters of puppies on the waitlist and litters of kittens on the waitlist, too.

Melissa Ruid, operations manager at the Menominee Animal Shelter, said the cat waiting list is backed up for a few months because “cats breed like rabbits.”

The lack of resources may cause people to think there are more stray cats and dogs than usual.

Mary Cherry, animal control officer for the City of Marinette, said it's not true for dogs in her case. She said she never gets reports that a dog is lost. Some will call and say their dog got out, but not that it's lost.

Cats are another subject, although she said she still doesn't think it's out of control.

“There are a lot of stray cats in Marinette,” Cherry said. “It all starts out with not getting your animal spayed or neutered.”

She said many male cats with no owner are breeding with stray female cats. They multiply when people start letting their intact cats out of their homes.

A stray cat is a cat who lived indoors and was socialized at some point but left or lost its home, or was abandoned, and no longer has regular human contact, according to Alley Cat Allies, a nonprofit organization.

It's against Menominee and Marinette law for owners to let their animals — cats or dogs — roam freely off their

property. Marinette charges a \$439 fine if the dog or cat keeps getting out.

Dogs found in Marinette with no tag or collar go to the Menominee Animal Shelter, N184 Haggerson Court, Menominee, and cats to Town & Country Veterinary Clinic, 1292 U.S. 41, Marinette.

Hofer said that Menominee tries to contact the owner when they find a loose dog.

The laws for Marinette and Menominee go on and on, and they're clear on not wanting animals to be on the loose to prevent breeding.

“Most of the animals that come are owner-surrendered animals,” said Ruid, from the animal shelter.

People give up their animals because they either can't take care of their pet, they're not able to take their pet when they're moving or their landlord is not allowing pets, she said.

She started the position in June, moving from Alaska, where she was previously at a shelter in charge of 4,000 animals a year.

“Something I've noticed here is the lack of microchipping or pet identification in general,” Ruid said.

When people let their cats out, they think they'll return, but she said that's not necessarily the case.

“When you don't chip your animals, and they come to the shelter, we have no way to contact the owner,” Ruid said.

Microchipping is not a service open to the public at the shelter, though all adopted animals leave with a microchip. They also do not offer spay and neuter services except for adopted animals. It's not an outside service, she said.

Pet owners generally know to spay and neuter, but Ruid thinks there's a shortage of vets here.



EAGLEHERALD/ERIN NOHA

Queen is a pitbull mix available for adoption at the Menominee Animal Shelter.

“There's not really a lot of vets that live in this area,” Ruid said. “Many people drive to metro services.”

COVID lockdowns affected the veterinary profession. People who lost jobs may not have had enough money to get pets spayed and neutered, too. That could lead to more animals ending up on the streets, because they have the chance to breed and multiply, and people can't take care of them, Ruid said.

“I think it's a community issue,” she said. “I don't think it's any one profession or neighborhood or person. The effects of this span from the pandemic.”

Rocci Downs, a retired veterinarian and one of two vets at the Menominee Animal Shelter, said many freshly graduated veterinary students opt to work with larger companies that can offer a higher salary.

“When they graduate, they have a lot higher debt level than I had when I graduated,” she said. “A lot of the corporate vets don't care about anything but money — they can pay an extraordinarily higher salary

than what an independent employer would offer.”

Pet owners may have a less personalized experience when they bring their pets to a bigger place, Downs said.

“When you go to corporate places, you're going to have to go to a different doctor every time,” she said.

Still, that's the only option people have at this time.

The only time Cherry gets in touch with new homeowners in the area is when their animals get out. That's when she tells them about the ordinances and such.

“It's very important that you should get your animals microchipped

because then it can get back to their owner right away,” she said.

Cherry also recommends veterinarian services for recent transplants to the area.

“A lot of people who come to this area have to find a veterinarian,” she said. “It is hard to become a new client.”

Blue Pearl Animal Hospital in Appleton or Green Bay is an expensive emergency hospital, but it's an option, Cherry said.

“It's not like their animals can't get any veterinary care,” she said.

Downs retired last December from Amberg, where she was a vet for 25 years. She drives back and forth to get to the

shelter from her residence in Amberg every Monday, about a one-hour commute each way.

“I retired, but there was a need, and I just can't let animals suffer,” she said. “I come over once a week and spay and neuter for the animal shelter.”

Downs recalled her vet days and mentioned that many baby boomers were retiring, but she wasn't sure if that meant a shortage of vets. The profession is taxing, and whatever happens, they can't carry their emotions over from appointment to appointment.

“The client only lost one pet, but I lost five pets that week,” Downs said. “You can't carry that over to your next exam. Sometimes I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to sit and cry for a while until I can do my next exam. We get mentally fatigued. Our suicide rate is sometimes the highest in the nation.”

About 2% of her clients were rude, Downs said.

“I'm not in the back having a coffee and a donut,” she said. “I'm doing the best I can.”

People can call the Marinette Police Department at 715-732-5200 or the Menominee Police Department at 906-863-5568 to report missing dogs and cats.

Erin Noha can be reached by email at enoha@eagleherald.com

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