



8/1/24 Media Release

Sheriff's HEART Rescues Pets in Park Fire Burn Scar

Chico, CA – Several pets trapped in the Park Fire and subsequent burn scar were rescued this past weekend by members of the Nevada County Sheriff's Humane Emergency Animal Rescue Team (HEART), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization launched by the Nevada County Sheriff's Office (NCSO) that is dedicated to helping animals and their owners in the community who need rescue and evacuation during an emergency.

NCSO Animal Control Supervisor Stefanie Geckler, who manages HEART, received a mutual aid request from Butte County Sheriff's Office for animal evacuation and rescue on the morning of July 27 as numerous animals had been lost or stranded in the Park Fire, which remains active. She immediately put out an alert for HEART volunteers and by 5 a.m. the following morning, July 28, a team of 25 people in nine trucks with nine animal trailers had gathered with emergency supplies and were on the road to Butte County.

The 25 HEART volunteers were broken into nine teams to conduct extensive searching in the burn scar. In the two days the Sheriff's HEART provided mutual aid (July 28-29), they responded to over 100 calls for service. Geckler's team alone successfully located and rescued 21 animals in the burn scar, including 16 cats, four dogs and one bunny (even more animals were rescued by the other eight HEART teams).

"The condition of the animals varied greatly," said Geckler. "While some fared surprisingly well, others were burned badly or were in apparent respiratory distress."

All the animals saved were successfully reunified with their families or sheltered and many received veterinarian care from local veterinarians the same day.

Of the pets Geckler's team rescued, one ultimately did not survive her injuries. The female dog was having trouble breathing but as HEART carries animal oxygen kits, the team was able to provide her oxygen and transport her immediately to a veterinarian in comfort.

"She rode in the front seat with me and my partner and was held and comforted the whole way to the vet," recalled Geckler. "There, she was met by her family and while she ultimately passed away from the internal injuries she sustained, we are fortunate that her family was able to say goodbye and be with her at the end."

The Sheriff's HEART is made possible by NCSO, amazing volunteers and donations for ongoing training and emergency equipment. HEART volunteers frequently utilize their own personal vehicle and equipment for rescue missions with no compensation. To further HEART's help in the community, donations may be given on Paypal to @NCSheriffsHEART, via Venmo to @NevadaCounty-SheriffsHEART, or via mail to Sheriff's HEART at 980 Maidu Avenue, Nevada City, CA 95959.