

# **New X-ray machine helps SCRAPS care for animals**

Thanks to community donations, the veterinarian at Spokane County Regional Animal Protection Service has an X-ray machine that allows her to diagnose and treat injuries in animals that come in the shelter door.

Previously, sick and injured animals had to be transported to local veterinarians to get an X-ray, which costs time and money.

Sometimes, the scans were not available right away because the vet office the animal was taken to was busy, delaying care for the animal, Dr. Elizabeth O'Keeffe said. That can force a holding pattern in which the animal is on pain medication but not receiving treatment, she said.

"I don't always get them back in a timely fashion," she said. "I'm calling and waiting. We're not getting real-time care. We're not getting real-time images."

Sometimes, she can feel that an animal has a broken leg, but an X-ray is still needed.

"I can't see what's actually broken," she said. "Is it fixable?"

Even if the digital X-ray images are available quickly, there's still the time it takes for the animal to be transported and seen. A variety of local vets is used, but O'Keeffe said animals are often taken to Emergency Pet Care in Post Falls, a 30-minute drive. "They're the ones who take care of most of our critical cases," she said.

All of the medical treatment costs at SCRAPS, including O’Keeffe’s salary, are paid by the SCRAPS Hope Foundation, a nonprofit organization funded by community donations. Spokane County’s budget for SCRAPS does not include any funding for medical care for the animals, foundation vice president Ted Langerin said.

“That’s why the donations get allotted to medical,” he said.

Now the foundation will save money that used to be spent on paying outside veterinarians and transporting the animals back and forth, Langerin said.

A new X-ray machine typically costs \$90,000. Langerin said the foundation was told the Heinz and Anne Zegke Foundation wanted to make a donation that would have a long-term impact on the animals that SCRAPS serves. The Zegke foundation donated \$14,000 with the stipulation that the money be matched, and the SCRAPS Hope Foundation kicked in another \$31,000 that was raised during a social media campaign at the end of last year.

O’Keeffe said a local vet, Dr. Mark McFrederick at Suncrest Vet Services, donated the table required for the X-ray system.

“He was upgrading his system and part of it could be used and he donated it,” she said.

Having an X-ray machine has been O-Keeffe’s goal since she arrived at SCRAPS three years ago.

“It quickens the diagnostic capability to evaluate an injured animal,” she said. “It does not prolong their pain by being transported back and forth.”

Injured animals being brought into SCRAPS is a common occurrence, O'Keeffe said.

"We see broken legs," she said. "We see kitties come in who have gotten tangled in car engines."

Langerin said before the SCRAPS Hope Foundation was formed, the survival rate for sick and injured animals taken in at the shelter was 50%. Now, with a vet on site and medical treatment paid for by the foundation, the survival rate is 95%, he said.

"We believe in the necessity of having someone like Beth here," he said.

The new X-ray machine has arrived and O'Keeffe said it should be up and running by the end of the week. She's identified her first clients, two cats with fractures that need X-rays to make sure everything is healing properly.

The goal is to heal injured animals so they can be adopted out to new homes, she said.

"We can provide," she said. "We can heal them and adopt them out. That's what the community donations pay for."

Mail donations to 4612 S. Schafer Branch Road, Spokane Valley  
99206-9225.