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Police seize 85 animals at pet shop

The owner of the Santa Ana store is cited for alleged substandard conditions and neglect.

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Eighty-five animals were seized from a Santa Ana pet shop and its owner was cited on numerous counts of animal neglect, authorities said Tuesday.

Shahram Behafarin, owner of Village Pets near South Coast Plaza, was cited for operating the shop in substandard conditions without air conditioning.

Temperatures in some display cages ranged from 95 to 101 degrees, with unclean water and some animals seriously injured, near death or lying in their own urine and feces, officials said.

One display case at the front of the South Bristol Street shop was crammed with 50 puppies.

"We seized all animals that showed any signs of neglect but left reptiles and birds," said Jose Gonzalez, a spokesman for the Santa Ana Police Department.

In all, he said, 56 dogs, six cats, 22 rabbits and a guinea pig were seized Friday and taken to the city animal shelter.

"Many animals had no water or it was too dirty for them to drink," Gonzalez said. "Later examinations of the seized animals showed that they had scabies, protruding rectums, fevers, up-

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per respiratory problems and many were very emaciated."

All of the animals were recovering, he said, and none were expected to be euthanized.

Behafarin, reached Tuesday at his shop, which is still open, attributed the incident to a misunderstanding.

"They came three times before," he said, "but didn't find anything. This time, out of [bad] luck, my air conditioner was broken. It was an accident — accidents happen."

The animals were removed after several customers complained about the sale of sick and dying pets, Gonzalez said.

By Tuesday, he said, all of them had been bathed, vaccinated and given the appropriate medications.

He is also scheduled to appear in court on the misdemeanor citations in October. If convicted, Gonzalez said, Behafarin could face fines and up to a year in jail.

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Times editorial employee Farnaz Calafi contributed to this report.