

## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

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**POMONA, NY – Friday, November 23, 2018** – Hi Tor Animal Shelter will temporarily suspend its animal surrender services effective immediately due to an outbreak of *Microsporum canis* (ringworm), a highly contagious fungal infection that has affected the shelter's cat population. *Microsporum canis*, which can be transmitted by direct contact or contact with contaminated objects or surfaces, was discovered in the shelter earlier this month after the Board of Directors made a change in management.

Pet adoptions will continue, but only for those animals that have been examined and certified healthy by a veterinarian. The shelter is currently coordinating alternative surrender services and will provide that information as soon as arrangements are confirmed. The shelter will continue to care for the animals that are currently housed, but will not accept any new animals until this issue has been resolved.

While an inconvenience for the public, the board's decision was based on taking the strongest steps necessary for the health and well-being of those animals that have been infected, as well as to eradicate the infection from the shelter. The goal is to restore health to the shelter population and ensure that infected animals are not placed in adoptive homes.

"We offer our deepest apologies to the community for this inconvenience," said Debbie DiBernardo, President, Hi Tor Board of Directors. "We were shocked to discover what happened and are aggressively working to care for these animals and to take the steps necessary to ensure this never happens again."

Volunteer veterinarians from the region who were helping out at the shelter on November 4 and 5, began detecting and treating cases of *Microsporum canis*. That was one day after the November 3 termination of the shelter's manager, which was immediately followed by several employees abandoning their jobs and the animals. The veterinarians returned and diagnosed additional cases and on November 19 confirmed an outbreak. The outbreak's cause is attributed to failure by former management and employees to abide by standard protocols specific to inspecting, handling

and accepting infected animals; protocols that when properly followed prevent the spread of infection.

Because the shelter's cat population has been compromised, emergency housing, examination, treatment and rehab accommodations are being established separate from the shelter itself.

A team of veterinarians and vet techs from the region has been voluntarily handling diagnosis and treatment within the shelter population. There are currently more than 200 cats in the shelter and an estimated 200 more in foster care. A massive clean-up of the shelter premises has already been completed and many of the animals have been diagnosed and are receiving treatment.

The board has been working to stabilize the shelter's operations for quite some time and has restored its financial stability and has hired a new manager. The shelter continues to receive support from veterinarians from throughout the region, Rockland County, the surrounding towns the shelter serves as well as from animal foster families and rescue groups.

Hi Tor will continue to post updates on its website and Facebook pages as new information becomes available.