

# Woman Arrested After Helping Animals Affected by Hurricane Florence

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by [Mary Jo Dilonardo](#)

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As Hurricane Florence was barreling toward the Carolinas, many [pet owners weren't sure what they were going to do](#) with their dogs and cats. Some couldn't take them along to shelters or hotels or didn't have room in their rush to evacuate.

Tammie Hedges, founder of Crazy's Claws N Paws, a nonprofit group that helps low-income families with veterinary bills, offered an option. The Wayne County, North Carolina, woman had a warehouse space she was in the process of converting into an animal shelter. The facility wasn't officially registered as a shelter yet, but Hedges opened anyway, taking in 17 cats and 10 dogs before the storm hit. Eighteen of the animals belonged to one elderly couple.

"The owners got to evacuate. They got to save themselves. But who's going to save those animals? That's what we did," Hedges told [USA Today](#). "We saved them."

Thanks to donations, Hedges was able to buy food, crates and other supplies needed to help the animals weather the hurricane. She said volunteers stayed with the dogs and cats 24 hours a day.

But once the storm passed, Hedges learned not everyone was happy with her actions. Hedges says she received a call from

Wayne County Animal Control about the animals. She was told to hand over the animals or they would get a warrant. Hedges willingly surrendered them.

### Charges, crowdfunding and a petition

A few days later Hedges was called in for questioning, and then she was arrested for administering medicines to the animals without a veterinary license, among other charges. A [Facebook post](#) on the rescue's website breaks down the charges:

"1 count of administering amoxicillin to Big Momma, 1 count of administering Tramadol to Big Momma, 3 counts of administering amoxicillin to a white Siamese cat, 3 counts of administering a topical antibiotic ointment (triple antibiotic from Dollar Tree) to a white Siamese cat, 3 counts of administering amoxicillin to a cat known as Sweet Pea, 1 count of administering amoxicillin to an unnamed black kitten, and 1 count of solicitation to commit a crime (asking for donation of Tramadol (that was suppose to be a request for a vet))."

"I think it's really sad that when someone tries to do the right thing, they're punished for it," Kathie Davidson, a volunteer with the rescue, [told CBS17](#).

Volunteers and supporters are contributing to a [crowdfunding campaign](#) to help cover Hedges' legal fees; that effort has surpassed its \$20,000 goal. There's also an [online petition](#) asking that she not be fined. As of the publication of this article, it had more than 8,100 signatures.

Wayne County Animal Services [issued a statement](#) about the situation.

"All animals surrendered were checked out by a licensed veterinarian and Animal Services is working to reunite them with their owners.

“Wayne County Animal Services turned the case over to the Wayne County District Attorney’s office based on suspicion of practicing veterinarian medicine without a license and the presence of controlled substances. At this time, Ms. Hedges has only been charged with (12) counts of misdemeanor practice/attempt veterinary medicine without a license and (1) count of solicitation of a Schedule 4 controlled substance. Ms. Hedges is considered innocent until proven guilty.”

Supporters weigh in

The statement prompted hundreds of comments from people who support Hedges’ actions. The rescue’s Facebook page has also been inundated with support from people who can’t believe the charges.

“Sometimes you need to go with what is RIGHT even if they law says it is wrong. this lady was doing what alot of people wouldn’t do..she’s a hero,” wrote Kimberly Ann Miller.

A few people questioned that Hedges was soliciting for and administering [Tramadol](#). Tramadol is a drug used to treat pain in pets, but it’s also used by people for pain. It’s a Schedule 4 controlled substance, meaning it has a low potential for abuse or dependence, but it still can only be prescribed by a doctor or a veterinarian.

But most thought her heart was in the right place.

Wrote Cathy K: “Let’s support those trying to help both animals and people in times of disaster! We could offer them education and supplies beforehand, rather than penalizing them for helping after the fact. Those of us who volunteer in animal rescue realize that sometimes you just have to do what you can with whatever resources are available in order to save lives.”