

Urgent pet care sought on North Olympic Peninsula

Group seeks local emergency veterinarians

By Ken Park

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PORT ANGELES — The newly formed Pet Emergency Group is setting its sights on addressing the lack of after-hours emergency veterinary care on the North Olympic Peninsula.

“Our goal is to build, grow and sustain access to after-hours emergency pet care, which is not currently available anywhere on the Peninsula,” Sally Rodgers, board chair for Pet Emergency Group (PEG), told the Port Angeles Chamber of Commerce at its monthly meeting on Wednesday.

Right now the closest emergency veterinarian for pet owners in Clallam and Jefferson counties is Poulsbo, she said.

“We have heard so many stories of people losing their pets because they could not get them the care that they needed because there were no emergency services and they couldn’t make it to Poulsbo,” Rodgers said.

PEG was established in 2021. It operates under the fiscal sponsorship of Olympic View Community Foundation, which is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization providing PEG 501(c)(3) status.

Rodgers said the group is a few weeks away from establishing a capital campaign for funds to recruit volunteer veterinarians to provide after-hours emergency care.

“We want to help remove some of the barriers to establishing after-hours emergency care,” Rodgers said.

Among the barriers in the field is the labor shortages many businesses are now experiencing.

“Many clinics don’t offer after-hour emergency care because they don’t have the staff,” Rodgers said. “Even during regular business hours, these clinics have a limited amount of staff on hand.”

Regional veterinarians could not be reached for comment regarding staffing levels or after-hours operations.

Another issue is population density, she said; are there sufficient pets in the area to support an after-hours emergency clinic?

Rodgers said that pet ownership on the Peninsula has grown by 20 percent since 1988 and estimates that there are over 58,000 dogs and cats in Clallam and Jefferson counties combined.

“We definitely have the density, but we also have to have a number of established primary care vets that would be referring to an emergency facility,” Rodgers said.

A general survey showed that there are four primary care veterinarians within Port Angeles city limits, 10 clinics in Clallam County, and four in Jefferson County. None offer after-hours emergency care.

“What our organization is hoping to do is attract emergency veterinarians who have a passion for emergencies, trauma surgeries, and after-hours coverage,” Rodgers said.

She said that the group is working on developing the right business model needed to accomplish its goals and create a long-term solution to this problem.

Those interested in learning more, can visit <https://www.petemergencygroup.org/> or email info@petemergencygroup.org.

‘We are seeking volunteers with a wealth of experience in multiple areas, specifically in fundraising campaigns, grant writing, and recruitment,’ Rodgers said.

Reporter Ken Park can be reached at kpark@peninsuladailynews.com