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**FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, ANIMAL HOARDING IS EXPLAINED, ADDRESSED
AND TACKLED IN ANIMAL PLANET'S CONFESSIONS: ANIMAL HOARDING**

-- Beginning July 21, Six-part series explores the Human Aspect of Animal Hoarding --

(Silver Spring, Md.) – There are more than an estimated 350 million pets in America that are considered part of the family according to a nationwide survey. These animals can bring us enormous joy, love, companionship and laughter, and we can provide loving and safe homes in return. But there are a surprisingly high number of cases in the United States – more than 3,500 reported each year – where someone is acquiring a high and unmanageable number and variety of animal species. This is animal hoarding. It's defined as the compulsive need to possess and control animals. It's unhealthy and deeply unfortunate for the hoarder, their family members and the reported 250,000 pets hoarded annually.

Animal hoarding is a serious and growing problem, and it affects *every* community in America. In many cases, it goes unrecognized until it becomes a crime. Until Now.

Animal Planet's **CONFESSIONS: ANIMAL HOARDING** is an unflinchingly honest look at this condition. This series marks the first time animal hoarding is explored as a complex human condition that affects both the animals and the people involved. Though animal hoarding is not yet recognized as a distinct psychological disorder in the psychiatric diagnostic manual with a set course of treatment, the mental health community is trying to better understand animal hoarding through a human lens. Animal Planet's series is providing a forum where experts in psychology and veterinary health can address and unlock the problem on a national level.

Premiering **July 21, at 9 PM, CONFESSIONS: ANIMAL HOARDING** delves into the hearts and minds of individuals afflicted with this disorder and provides a voice to the family and friends who are determined to prevent their loved ones from spinning further out of control. Throughout the six episodes, cameras enter the homes of men and women – in their early 20s through the retirement years – discovering what it's like for animals and people to live among such toxic conditions which result from an unbelievably large menagerie of animals. And, Animal Planet gets to the heart of the matter, exploring the reasons why these individuals turned to hoarding and how their problems spun rapidly out of control.

“While the public recognizes hoarding as profoundly sad and toxic problem, they often forget there's a rich and complex human aspect to the condition,” says Dr. Karen Cassaday, owner and clinical director of the Anxiety and Agoraphobia Treatment Center in Chicago. “People who hoard animals are not bad people. In fact, they are often very loving, caring individuals who mistake good intentions with unfortunate actions. The people you meet in **CONFESSIONS: ANIMAL HOARDING** believe that by taking in a large number of dogs, cats, birds, horses and reptiles, they

are doing the ultimate good deed – when in fact, their deed is negatively affecting all the people and animals involved.”

According to the experts, animal hoarding is the underlying symptom to a much greater psychological issue. For example, if an individual experiences the loss or shift in an important relationship, such as a death of a loved one, a breakup or a sudden empty nest, he/she may acquire animals to as a form of substitution and expression of compassion and love. There are a myriad of situations that trigger a compulsion to hoard, and Animal Planet delves into understanding both the causes and symptoms and then provides these individuals with an expert cadre of support to take healthy steps in working through their problems.

“There is very little information gathered about animal hoarding compared with what’s known about object hoarding,” says Dr. Gary Patronek, Vice President for Animal Welfare & New Programs at the Animal Rescue League of Boston. “There are some parallels between the two, but there’s one incredibly important difference; animal hoarding involves other living beings – namely animals – that suffer the dire consequences. This can include a multitude of severe physical and mental health problems, such as disease, weight loss, anxiety, fear, lack of exercise among many other issues.”

CONFESSIONS: ANIMAL HOARDING brings a surprising range of stories to Animal Planet, showing that there’s no such thing as they typical hoarder. The network gathers stories about women *and* men of all ages who hoard as well as individuals who hoard beyond typical pets like cats and dogs; some stories include those who have a large number of farm animals, birds and reptiles.

“Each story is unique in its rite,” says Marjorie Kaplan, president and general manager of Animal Planet. “The network recognizes that animal hoarding exists and is growing by leaps and bounds, and there’s something we all need to do about this, not only to help the animals affected in the scenarios, but to help the individuals involved along with their family and loved ones. The complex nature of hoarding must be approached with understanding, honesty and compassion for all.”

CONFESSIONS:ANIMAL HOARDING is produced for Animal Planet by GRB etc etc.

Animal Planet Media (APM), a multi-media business unit of Discovery Communications, is the world's only entertainment brand that immerses viewers in the full range of life in the animal kingdom with rich, deep content via multiple platforms and offers animal lovers and pet owners access to a centralized online, television and mobile community for immersive, engaging, high-quality entertainment, information and enrichment. APM consists of the Animal Planet television network, available in more than 96 million homes in the US; online assets www.animalplanet.com, the ultimate online destination for all things animal; the 24/7 broadband channel, Animal Planet Beyond; Petfinder.com, the #1 pet-related Web property globally that facilitates pet adoption; and other media platforms including a robust Video-on-Demand (VOD) service; mobile content; and merchandising extensions.