

Octagon suffers operational losses in structure fire

BY ROGER DICKINSON

rdickinson@floridaweekly.com



Thousands of dollars in equipment, supplies and medicine were lost in the May 24 fire at Octagon Wildlife Sanctuary.

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A May 24 electrical fire at the Octagon Wildlife Sanctuary in Punta Gorda destroyed its animal rehab, medical storage facilities and adjoining structures.

Lauri Caron, the animal sanctuary's director and owner, said the nonprofit has no replacement or property insurance on the structures. Octagon carries insurance required by Florida Fish and Wildlife for the safety of its volunteers and animals.

Veterinary equipment, including a \$1,500 microscope, medicines and supplies, a refrigerator, filing and storage cabinets, furniture and computers will all have to be replaced.

"We lost everything," Ms. Caron said. "I don't even have the blowgun I use to tranquilize

animals for treatment. We need basic items like fencing, tools, hoses, wheelbarrows, buckets, hoes and rakes."

Ms. Caron estimates it will cost \$4,500 to tear down and remove the fire-damaged structures, after which replacement trailers and structures must be secured for animal rehabilitation and veterinary use.

No volunteers were injured in the blaze, and no exotic animals were lost.

The Octagon Wildlife Refuge is home to more than 150 exotic animals, including bears, lions, tigers, alligators, wolves, primates, birds, leopards and cougars.



Octagon has no paid employees, and is operated by a team of volunteers. Admission fees go to the housing and welfare of the animals, Ms. Caron said.

To help, contact the Octagon Wildlife Sanctuary at (239) 543-1130 or visit www.octagonwildlife.org.

