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Literature Review of Animal Hoarding

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INTRODUCTION
- OCD is defined by intrusive thoughts, images, or urges (obsessions) and actions to suppress these thoughts (compulsions)
- Hoarding is considered a subtype of OCD that includes compulsively collecting items and difficulty discarding anything because of potential use or sentimental value
- Animal hoarding is collecting an excessive number of animals that they cannot provide for
- This paper reviews:
  - Symptomatology
  - Etiology
  - Treatment
  - Relation to OCD and object hoarding

Symptomatology
- Compulsively collect many more animals than they can provide for
- Takes up most of their living space resulting in extreme filth
- Substantial neglect and lack of insight into poor conditions

Etiology
- Traumatic life event
- Fulfill a psychological need
- Seen as extensions of the hoarder

Treatments
- Usually dealt with through the legal system and go to trial for animal cruelty
  - Agencies turn a blind eye
  - When they do deal with the problem, not effective
  - Assume the problem will go away when they take the animals away
  - Rate of recidivism is 100% without long-term plan
- Mandatory therapy becoming more common
  - No established treatment, so therapists may not know how to deal with the problem
  - Social therapy, cognitive behavioral interventions, and a multidisciplinary approach are recommended
  - Poor prognosis because don’t present for treatment on their own and may not comply

Object Hoarding
- Acquire items through compulsive spending and collecting free items
- Unlivable because of so much clutter

Conclusions
- There is still much to learn about animal hoarding
- It is critical that we develop effective treatments
  - Destroys relationships
  - Threatens health of those involved
  - Harms thousands of animals
  - The legal system is not effective