

Hungry pets found picking at dead owner

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Page: 1 / FRONT

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Byline: Brion Robinson

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Illustration: Color Photo: Perry Beaton, Special to The Record / A 39-year-old woman was found dead in her Sherbrooke apartment on Wednesday. Police say her pets had started mutilating her body.

SHERBROOKE - Sherbrooke police will know more about the cause of death of a 39-year-old woman who was found partly devoured by her cats and dogs on Wednesday once autopsy results are released in a few weeks.

Police spokesman Andre Lemire said the woman's body was discovered around 1:30 p.m. in an apartment at 1460 Pacific street by the building's caretaker and an agent with the Societe protectrice des animaux de l'Estrie (SPA.)

Lemire said the agent was responding to a call from the caretaker after neighbours complained about constant barking and a rotting smell coming from apartment 8 on the basement floor.

Lemire said the caretaker and agent found the woman's dead body in her bedroom. Her exposed hands and face were partially eaten by her three domestic cats and two Yorkshire terrier dogs.

He noted that police suspect the woman had been dead for about three days. Lemire did not say how much of the woman's face had been eaten but he did say it was unidentifiable.

Lemire said the cause of death is still unknown but police are treating the death as suspicious because broken plates and glasses were found littered around the apartment.

He said police will know more in a couple of weeks once an autopsy is completed in Montreal.

"The problem now is that we don't know how she died," he said.

One of the woman's neighbours, Jeremy Berger, said he didn't notice anything suspicious until Monday when the dogs started barking more and more often.

Berger, who arrived at the building 15 minutes after police, also said he didn't smell anything rotting until police arrived and opened the woman's door.

The 24-year-old has been living in the building for about a year and a half. He said he only saw the woman, he described as being of average height with brown hair, about once a week.

He added she was quiet, friendly and kept to herself.

At the back of the building, SPA agent Reuben Gutierrez, wearing a white face mask, removed the cats and dogs in separate cages. The small furry brown lap dogs had fur that looked wet around their faces. They didn't bark.

Gutierrez said the animals were in fairly healthy condition when he found them.

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