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NEWS

Fire department gets training on heavy animal rescue

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A horse breaks through a fence and gets stuck in waste-deep mud, or a tractor trailer load of pigs tip over in a highway accident.

In situations like these, the Halton Hills fire department is now prepared to respond, thanks to a training program they attended in Dufferin County.

"There hasn't been a lot this year," said Hugh Hennessey, a firefighter with the department who gave an update to the community and corporate affairs committee on the program.

"We have had a few in the past," he said, noting that two years ago, firefighters were called to assist two cows that had fallen through ice and were trapped.

"They're considered family members to some people," Hennessey said, explaining that the cows that had broken through ice were specialty show cattle. The Halton Hills fire department now has a large animal rescue program, one of the few departments in the GTA with specialized training in large animal rescue.

"It's one of the newest disciplines," he said, talking about all the different forms of technical rescue that firefighters do. Hennessey went over the different tools that his staff can



Dylan DaCosta

Halton Hills Fire Department is now equipped with tools and knowledge to deal with heavy animal rescues, including situations where livestock are involved in highway accidents.

use to free a horse or cow from heavy mud. They have tools that can blow air and separate the mud away from the animal, they can also use hoses to wash away the debris.

"We have to break that vacuum, or we'll never get it out," he said, explaining that the suction action in mud can have a devastating effect on a large animal trying to get out.

Staff are now trained and equipped with specialized hooks and pulleys to help an animal without further injuring them. The department now has a veterinarian on call, in the event the animal needs to be sedated or treated during the rescue. "We anticipate more calls," he said, noting that increased traffic on the roads of Halton Hills play a role.

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