

After Afro-Cuban religious rituals, activists find animal remains, turtles chained

Activists with Animal Recovery Mission share findings

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Animal activists rescued two turtles chained together for a ritual in Miami. Photo courtesy of Animal Recovery Mission

MIAMI - Animal activists said they recently rescued two little turtles that survived a ritual in Miami and were being rehabilitated at the Pelican Harbor Seabird Station.

A part of the turtles' shells were perforated to run one chain through both of them. There were also small metal locks attached to the silver chain, which was linked to two ruby red Voodoo dolls.

A photo showed there were two pictures of a man and a woman.

"Hate to be the guy in the pic," Janet Morgan wrote on Facebook.

Activists with the [Animal Recovery Mission](#) say they have been busy. There have been more rituals involving animals than usual in Miami. Rachel Taylor, an activist with ARM, attributes this to Santeria and Palo Mayombe, both religions with Afro-Cuban and Roman Catholic influence.

"These religions heavily involve the sacrifice of animals," [Taylor wrote](#).

On Tuesday, practitioners of Santeria marked the Feast Day of Shango, their most-feared deity. It's a day when *Santeros* honor the deity, also known as St. Barbara, with offerings. According to their religious [tradition](#), Shango has an appetite for turtles, goats, sheep, roosters and red wine.

Near Miami's Hobie Island Beach Park, activists found about a dozen dead chickens and three dead goats. The chickens and one of the goats had their heads cut off steps away from the Rickenbacker Causeway, which connects Brickell with Virginia Key, over Biscayne Bay. Two of the goats had their throats slit. Photos of the activists' findings also show abandoned fruit, candles and small wooden heads of deities. Activists with the [Animal Recovery Mission](#) said they reported their findings to officers with the Miami Police Department.

Religious ritual slaughter has long been the subject of [legal disagreements](#).

[Florida law](#) states "the instantaneous severance of the carotid arteries with a sharp instrument" is a humane method of killing animals during rituals. The [animal cruelty laws](#) should not be "construed to prohibit, abridge or in any way hinder the [religious freedom](#) of any person or group." Animal activists want to change that.