

By DAWN SAGARIO

REGISTER STAFF WRITER

Agency, Ia. — An elderly farm couple were found dead in their home late Monday night, victims of an apparent murder-suicide, authorities said Tuesday.

The couple, identified as Dean Wilbur Thomann, 73, and his wife, Joann Elizabeth Thomann, 67, were found by police at their home east of town.

They were shot with a .22-caliber handgun, said Wapello County Sheriff Donald Kirkendall. He would not say who fired the gun or how many shots were fired until an autopsy is completed.

One victim was found in the kitchen, the other in the living room.

The sheriff's department received a 911 call about 10:15 p.m. Monday from one of the

victims, Kirkendall said. The caller said two people had been shot.

Officers arrived on the scene about 10 minutes after the call, the sheriff said. Officers from the sheriff's department, Iowa State Patrol and Eldon Police Department responded.

Both victims were found dead.

"The wounds to both of them were very traumatic," Kirkendall said, and nothing could be done.

A one-page letter was left behind, but Kirkendall declined to discuss the contents.

The Thomanns had both been married before and had lost spouses to illness, Kirkendall said. He was not aware of the couple having

any health or mental problems.

The Thomanns' neighborhood is quiet, with few calls made to police, Kirkendall said. Neighbors declined to comment about the couple.

The last murder-suicide in Wapello County was in November 1997, when an Ottumwa man shot to death a longtime girlfriend and used the same shotgun to kill himself.

The state medical examiner was performing autopsies Tuesday in Des Moines.

Reece Funeral Home in Ottumwa is handling the arrangements.

The investigation is being conducted by the sheriff's department and the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation.

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