



Dogs from puppy mill *rescued, rehabilitated, adopted*

Charlotte has allergies, bad knees, a heart murmur and muscular atrophy.

Her walk is a little wonky, a lower canine tooth protrudes, and she wears a perpetual quizzical expression. She couldn't make it down our shelter's back stairs without some help, but, once outside, she loved to sit in the wading pool and look at the sky, an activity she never enjoyed when she lived with other dogs in filthy cages in a dimly-lit outbuilding in rural Nebraska.

Charlotte—and her 172 kennelmates—were nothing more than a means to an end for a callous profiteer who used them to produce litters of pup-

pies that he sold to unsuspecting buyers via the Internet.

The dogs were rescued May 16, following a tip to a state inspector about deplorable conditions at this breeding facility. They were taken to the Nebraska Humane Society in Omaha, which had spearheaded the rescue effort. Most are still receiving care there, but some were brought to us and to the Humane Society of Boulder Valley.

"These dogs are far from the typical pets that shelters receive," said Theresa Geary, League vice president of operations. "That's why Nebraska Humane wisely asked for help.

"Many of these dogs have

significant physical and behavior problems. Some are going to need long-term rehabilitation. None are housetrained. A lot of resources are needed to bring them around."

Flower may have lived as long as 10 years at the facility—no one knows for sure. Like most of the others, this 4-pound Pomeranian was frightened beyond measure when she arrived at our shelter. Despite efforts to comfort and console her, she looked for places to hide, and remained tense and vigilant for several days.

Gradually, though, her body posture grew more relaxed. Then her tail began to wag, she offered an occasional play bow and she stretched out comfortably for naps.

was our human resources staffer Sarah Hein. She was among a group of employees who volunteered to socialize the dogs. "Almost as soon as the dogs arrived, the call came for us to provide one-on-one help with their adjustment," Sarah said. "I was reluctant to volunteer because I get so attached. But then I told myself that was selfish. By the time I decided to get involved, the response had been so great from staff that Flower was the only one left.

For the next two weeks, Flower spent her days in Sarah's office at the Quebec Street shelter. "She was really special, an uplifting little soul, and, of course, I wanted her in my life permanently," Sarah said. "I couldn't adopt her myself,



For the first time in her life, she began to trust.

The object of Flower's trust

but the next best thing happened. She went to a great home with one of our big-hearted volunteers. 🐾

Nebraska puppy mill *shut down*

Until mid-May, this Dawson County, Nebraska, puppy mill was churning out Chihuahuas, Pomeranians and other toy breeds by the hundreds for sale on the Internet.

It was one of an unknown number of similar operations across the country, where animals are kept in small cages, have little human interaction and repeatedly pro-



duce puppies for profit. Dogs from such sources can be diseased because of dismal kennel conditions or have genetic defects because of inbreeding and other poor breeding practices.



The owner, whose name has not been released to the public, agreed to relinquish 173 dogs and puppies rather than face possible prosecution on charges of neglect and cruelty. Under an agreement reached with the county attorney, he goes scot-free, except that he is prohibited from owning any more dogs and is subject to random inspections.

“This apparent leniency concerns many people who understandably want to see the individual punished,” said Theresa Geary, vice-president of operations. “But had the case gone to court, the dogs could have been in limbo until a verdict was reached.



“Relinquishment was preferable, because it allowed the animal welfare community to take over, remove the dogs from the horrific conditions where they were living and get them immediate help.

“Charlotte and Flower (pictured on Page 1) are good examples of the desired outcome for these dogs,” Geary added. “Less than a month after their rescue, they are in permanent, loving homes. If the case had gone to court, they would have been held at a shelter possibly for months.” 🌸

Puppy mills thrive

where laws don't protect

Nebbraska is one of a number of states perceived as a haven for unscrupulous dog breeders. The reason is lax enforcement of standards for pet-related facilities. The state has only one agent for its inspection program. That agent is responsible for all commercial dog and cat breeders, kennels, pet shops and shelters in an area covering more than 77,000 square miles (20 percent larger than New England).

The agent, Rick Herchenbach, confirmed in interviews about the Dawson County puppy mill that Nebraska law does not require inspection of facilities applying for permits to sell animals to pet stores or brokers. In fact, he said, facilities may never be inspected unless complaints are received.

The situation is better in Colorado. Thanks to a stricter state law, an applicant's facility must be inspected before a permit is issued and periodically inspected for license-renewal purposes.

Dr. Kate Anderson, D.V.M., program administrator for the Pet Animal Care Facilities Act and the Colorado Bureau of Animal Protection, has three agents assigned to inspections. She said once a facility is licensed, its performance is monitored under a system that categorizes its risk potential from high to low. A high-risk

operation may be inspected as frequently as every six months – more often at the agent's discretion or if complaints are received. Low-risk facilities are inspected annually or on a rotating basis.

Dr. Anderson said Colorado has about 1,700 licensed pet animal care facilities to monitor. These include commercial breeders, pet stores, groomers, dog-training centers, shelters—any facility that houses 15 animals or produces more than two litters a year.

“We are also charged with compliance,” Dr. Anderson said, “which means we are always looking for possible unlicensed operators.” They rely heavily on tips from the public, and they investigate every call. Plus, they monitor online classified ads from several newspapers around the state, as well as Web sites like Craig's List. “I feel we're getting to places that need us and getting things done in a timely fashion,” she said.

Assistant State Veterinarian Dr. Keith Roehr seconded that statement. He said the situation with out-of-control breeders is very much under control in Colorado, and that is purely the result of the state law and the resources devoted to enforcing it. “I don't mean we don't have problems,” he said, “but we are much more able to deal with them thanks to the Pet Animal Care Facilities Act.” 🐾