



Capturing and leading these dogs are Sandra Gillis of the Birmingham Humane Society, with Chuck Smith of the Randolph County Animal Shelter, followed by Mindy Gilbert, state director of the Humane Society of the U.S. Some dogs had gotten out of their pens and were difficult to corral.



After being captured and giving blood for a heartworm test these dogs enjoy the air-conditioning of the mobile adoption & transport unit as Police Chief Adam Melton, left, and Mayor Mike Fisher check them out. This unit is the result of a \$128,000 grant from the ASPCA, allowing the Greater Birmingham Humane Society to recently purchase this

vehicle to be used in the transport of animals, mobile adoption events, and mobile veterinary care (including spaying and neutering). In light of the recent devastation of the April 27 tornadoes, the unit was of great use to the GBHS as it reached pets in need all over the Greater Birmingham area and beyond, all the way to Roanoke.



RCAS kennel manager Ricky Poole found this playful dog willing to go when he sprung him from his pen.

# Animal removal task force gets the job done

**Penny L. Pool**  
Staff Writer

It took a couple of months and a game plan to put it together but Tuesday about 53 dogs and an unknown number of cats were removed from a trailer lot off of LaFayette Highway.

However, Craig Carse was not at home. Chief Adam Melton said he had come by the office and shook his hand and thanked him.

He had built the pens over much of the lot and fed and watered the animals but said they had become a burden. His deceased wife, Teresa, picked up strays but had turned into a hoarder. He was left to care for them.

The chief said this has been a long-running situation but there was nowhere to put the animals because earlier there was no Randolph County Animal Shelter. They were not going to destroy them, he said.

"This is not criminal. We don't expect to file any charges. He's very much cooperating and that is a blessing," Melton said. He tried to

take the best care he could of them, the chief said.

"There is no indication he abused or mistreated any of them," Fifth Judicial District Assistant Amy Newsome said.

She was first notified by Debbie Moncrief, the shelter's office manager, on a call about alleged abuse and neglect but when they got there that was not the situation, she said.

The district's chief investigator Aris Murphy is a former K-9 trainer and officer and an animal lover. Newsome loves animals too and both of them worked with others catching the dogs. They took them to the Greater Birmingham Humane Society air-conditioned trailer where director of operations Jerrett New took blood from every one, checking for heart worms.

Sandra Gillis, from the society, said they wanted to come help. If any of the dogs test positive for heart worms a decision will have to be made at that point.

Mindy Gilbert, director of the Alabama Humane



A Greater Birmingham Humane Society worker carries one reluctant dog to the waiting state-of-the-art mobile adoption and transport unit while another happily follows.

Society of the United States, said they could probably get 50 animals on board the vehicle. Every shelter in the state is full and she hopes the Montgomery Humane Society Shelter or the Birmingham one will take them.

"We'll take as many as we can," said this 25-year veteran. The organization in Montgomery has strong adoption programs and



This dog is pleased to be out of its pen and is outrunning Amy Newsome, assistant district attorney.

moves a lot of animals," she said.

Some of these shelters are private groups and some are government funded shelter. She estimated there are about 70 shelters in the state. Everybody's numbers have gone up because of the impact of the disasters and the economy, she said.

The group caught the dogs one by one, lassoing them,

then putting a leash on them. Some let them just slide on the leashes and followed them wagging their tails. Others may not have been touched in years and struggled to get away. Many later looked content through the plexi-glass from their air-conditioned pens on the bus. The 34-foot long truck is also used to take dogs to events where they try to get them adopted.

Chief Melton said, "I want to give a big thank you to Ms. Gilbert and her crew and the Randolph County Animal Shelter staff and all they do and the other people who helped out, including Amy and Aris... Ron (Cam-

eron) brought out the tent, the tables and chairs, and the mayor came out here to keep me company," he said.

Others working this operation were Chuck Smith, president of the Randolph County Animal Shelter, and board member Dugald McMillan, Roanoke nuisance officer Bill Ford, and Randy Moore and Shannon Laney who are assigned to the narcotics unit and wanted to help. By 3 p.m. most of the pens filled with barking dogs were empty for the first time in a long time. The signs reading Bama Blvd. and across the way Auburn Avenue no longer oversaw pens filled with dogs.

## Animals

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"I don't know how he did it but he's taken care of these dogs. If anything they are overfed," Smith said.

Smith said right now they have 57 animals at the animal shelter, and it takes the staff and volunteers all day to take care of them. Although they have expanded the cat area, it is full. Two kittens that just came in had to be put in carriers. So the shelter does not have room for the cats.

Smith said they have made room for four more dogs but most of them will be going elsewhere.

"They're good dogs," Smith said looking at the pens. "They were well taken care of," he said, adding Carse cleaned their pens.

"They'll make somebody a good dog," he said. He thinks people will respond with homes for the dogs.

Smith said this is a tough economy to get dogs adopted in. They have had good luck at the shelter but only have so much room. The dogs he already picked up from the Carse property, with the help of Ray Mansfield, will be adopted out free to good homes. Carse said all the dogs have been spayed or neutered but one.

Murphy said Carse is going to school to be a nurse and has been grieving since the death of his wife. A neighbor said he had graduated from Auburn University to be a teacher.

"His heart is as big as a steering wheel of a car," Murphy said. Losing a spouse is hard and he had more than one man could do, he added.

Due to Murphy's friendship with Mindy Gilbert, she agreed to bring in the resources of the Alabama Humane Society of the United States and the Greater Birmingham Humane Society to help. The state director of the Humane Society she has helped with other large cases in the county the past few years.

Carse said all of the dogs have names. A cute dog that resembled Benji goes by Annie. At one time they had 98 dogs, he said. But they have

become a burden to him.

Ever so often the police would come by and tell him he was violating the ordinance in the number of dogs on his property.

One week they got 13 dogs. They thought the dog was dying when they found it but she was pregnant with 12 puppies which she delivered.

He is cooperating and plans to only keep the Chihuahua he gave his wife, Teresa, last year. On Tuesday he left the premises as they came for the pets.

"It has got to the point I can't do this anymore," he said. He is thinking about moving to Columbus and plans to finish up his training to be a nurse. He couldn't go anywhere for more than a day but now is thinking about visiting his parents in Iowa.

Once he called one of the national animal organizations to plead for help, saying he had more than 50 dogs but said he never heard back from them.

"It's going to be a shock to come out and nobody is here. I had a great security system. But I will be glad when they are gone and are no longer my responsibility," he said.

"We didn't have any kids. We both worked at Roanoke Mills. Until recently Aw-

brey's gave me a discount and Sam (Shelnett) gave me a discount" (on the veterinarian bills). But for the last two or three years they could not longer keep their shots up to date or continue to buy them collars.

They did not go out and seek all the stray dogs. Marlena just showed up one day, he said pointing to a dog that constantly gets out of the pen. They took in others whose owners had moved into housing that did not allow pets. Some people brought pets by they said they would have to kill if he didn't take them.

Many are large, some are small, commingled in the same pens. None are vicious, Carse said. Smith said he did not think any of them were aggressive.

"Most of these dogs we found on the side of the road, behind the Bank of Wedowee, and some people just brought them by," Carse said.

He buys 150 pounds of dog food every other day, costing about \$62.

Pointing to one he calls Courtney, he said they found her in a hole behind Faith Baptist Church when they were chasing another dog.

All the cats are adoptable and healthy, he said. Most are domestic shorthairs.

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