



Removed from a small, muddy enclosure in Kansas (right), Bubba was taken to the Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch in Texas, where he can now soak in his own pool.



LOCATION:
Atchison, Kansas

ANIMALS ASSISTED:
9 exotic cats, 2 skunks

Bubba's enclosure was small. Ten paces took the tiger across his entire living space—just three strides if he broke into a run. Next to an old tire was a mid-sized branch that might have provided a decent perch for a domestic cat to climb upon, but it would have snapped easily under the weight of a tiger. With no grass to walk on, Bubba's belly and paws were caked with mud and excrement. A shabby shack in one corner provided his sole reprieve from the heat and cold.

In adjacent cages, cougars, bobcats, lynx, and a serval languished in similar conditions. Some animals had been declawed. All, like Bubba, were caked in filth. Off to the side, two de-scented skunks (illegal to own as pets) peered from a big-cat transport cage tipped on its side. None of the cages contained food or clean drinking water. "It wasn't a good setup at all," says The HSUS's Adam Parascandola. "These kinds of animals don't really belong in someone's backyard."

Though Kansas law prohibits keeping dangerous animals as pets, USDA licensing provides a loophole that allows private menageries like this to exist. After a concerned citizen notified local law enforcement that the animals had been abandoned, The HSUS rushed food to the scene with the help of the Kansas City Zoo. When The HSUS

and other animal rescue organizations arrived soon after to help law enforcement remove the animals in early May, Parascandola noted the enclosures were the same flimsy chain link he's seen dogs escape from. Gates were secured with a small, thin chain—even big Bubba's. "When the tiger jumped on the wall of his cage, the whole side would bow out," he says. "This was truly a looming disaster."

The animals were sedated, evaluated by veterinarians, and loaded onto transport vehicles. The cougars found homes at In-Sync Exotics in Texas. Big Cat Rescue in Florida took in the bobcats, lynx, and serval. The two skunks were transferred to Operation Wildlife in Kansas.

And after a 10-hour road trip, Bubba—who has since been renamed Alexander—settled into his new surroundings at The Fund for Animals' Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch, an HSUS affiliate in Murchison, Texas. He was soon sniffing and biting at the grass, climbing atop a big log, and batting around a huge red ball. "He's like a cub again," says Black Beauty director Ben Callison. "He is finally able to exhibit natural behaviors that he never could before."

In the fall, the 3-year-old cat and the sanctuary's other three tigers are scheduled to move into a four-acre wooded habitat, now under construction. "He'll finally be able to do something that I'm sure he's never done in his life," says Callison, "and that's run."

THIS PAGE: KATHY MILANI/THE HSUS; OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP LEFT & BOTTOM RIGHT: MEREDITH LEE/FOR THE HSUS; BOTTOM LEFT: BETH GAMMIE/REDFEVER

**LOCATION:**

Shelby, Ohio

CASE HISTORY:

245 dogs, including 205 Chihuahuas, rescued from a puppy mill last summer

She was the last Chihuahua in the cage. “Her eye was one big cataract. The other eye was cloudy,” says Amy Beichler, director of PAWS Ohio. But the old girl was attentive, expectant even. Beichler scooped her up and bundled her in a blanket for the drive home.

That was last August: The little Chihuahua and 244 other dogs were removed from a puppy mill after the breeder fell ill and surrendered them to the Humane Society of Richland County, which called on The HSUS for help.

This is now: Bubbles has settled into her new life with Beichler. She’s on medications for congestive heart failure, but her bald spots and deep bruises from living on a wire-bolted cage have healed. And though she doesn’t venture far from her cushy bed, she wriggles in delight with Beichler’s belly rubs.

The life she left behind couldn’t be more different. Jennifer Kulina-Lanese, an HSUS field responder, remembers the overpowering smells of ammonia and illness during the rescue—and how fleas covered her pants. Many of the dogs were stuffed three or four to a cage, and baldness, bloody sores, and blindness were common.

Thirteen emergency placement partners promptly answered The HSUS’s call for assistance, and within 72 hours all the dogs were in temporary or permanent homes. The Washington Animal Rescue League took 24 dogs, providing them with antibiotics and dental and eye care. To help socialize the animals, volunteers read to them—and by Christmas, many had been adopted.

The HSUS’s Sarah Barnett fostered and then eventually adopted a 5-year-old vision-impaired shar-pei from The Lost Dog and Cat Rescue Foundation, which also stepped up to help. Dimitri now accompanies Barnett to work, where he loves cuddling in her cubicle

with a stuffed alligator. His fear of the after-hours cleaning crew’s vacuums has prompted Barnett to start leaving on time rather than working late. “He’s teaching me how to slow down,” she says.

For Beichler, too, the return has been profound. “If I am having a really stressful day due to the nature of my work, animal rescue, all I have to do is pick her up.” Bubbles sniffs her hair and face and nudges her gently. “She knows when my heart is breaking.”



ON THE iPad:
View additional
images of the
rescued dogs.



The HSUS’s Jennifer Kulina-Lanese (left) says liberating the dogs felt like “walking on air.” After being treated at WARL, Moose Tracks and Caramel Cluster (top) and Chopstix (below) have all been adopted.

**ANIMAL RESCUE UPDATE**

In the wee hours of Easter Sunday, dozens of law enforcement agents descended on a rural wooded property in Mississippi where a dogfight was in process. In the chaos that ensued, shots were fired, chairs were flipped over around a fighting pit, and beer cans were strewn everywhere.

Spectators fleeing the scene lost shoes in the mud and hats and jackets to tree branches. Bloodied money littered the grounds. Bullet holes dotted abandoned vehicles. A lone pit bull sat dazed in the ring, his muzzle ripped open and bleeding, while a second dog lay wounded and dying in the surrounding woods—their injuries the result of a three-hour fight. Another 22 dogs were in crates, waiting their turn.

The raid marked the culmination of a monthslong investigation that began when California authorities asked The HSUS to assist a gang task force in the Sacramento area. Information gathered by The HSUS and various state and federal agencies eventually led authorities to the event in Benton County, Miss., where more than 200 men and women from across the country gathered to watch an alleged 10 championship matches.

“Some of the biggest names in dogfighting were at this fight,” says The HSUS’s Chris Schindler, who helped document the crime scene. More than 50 people were arrested, and those who escaped are being tracked from evidence left behind. Four people were later arrested in the Sacramento area, where another 18 dogs were seized. “We are hearing back from individuals engaged in this activity that this was one of the single most damaging things that has ever happened to dogfighting,” Schindler says, “and it’s sent shockwaves throughout the country.”