

HSUS staffers helped document living conditions before the dogs were removed for veterinary exams. "It is always moving to see how much they crave affection from people," says Amanda Arrington, shown here in Dothan, Ala.



LOCATION: 13 properties in Alabama and Georgia

ANIMALS ASSISTED: 367 dogs and 7 chickens

It was **early morning** and already sweltering in Elba, Ala., when rescuers found the black pit bull lying limp in the August sun. She had no relief from the heat; her plywood dog box, with the hood of a car leaning up against the side of it, was like an oven inside.

Emaciated and speckled with white scars on her face, chest, and forelimbs, she'd obviously been fought. She was filthy and covered in fleas, with no food or water, as if she'd been forgotten there to die. "Everybody knew she wasn't going to make it much longer," says The HSUS's Chris Schindler.

The old girl looked like she'd been bred a lot, too. That's how it is for winners and champions, Schindler says: "They breed them and breed them until they can't breed them anymore." Then the dogs become expendable.

But thanks to emergency medical attention and a historic rescue years in the making, she miraculously pulled through. Later named YaYa by hospital staffers, she was one of 360-plus dogs rescued that day from 13 suspected dogfighting properties in Georgia and Alabama. The HSUS and ASPCA assisted authorities in the seizure and care of the animals; 10 suspects from Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas were indicted on felony dogfighting charges.

Believed to be the second largest dogfighting bust in U.S. history, the coordinated raids followed a three-year federal investigation

throughout which The HSUS supplied authorities with key information on suspected dogfighters. (An additional raid, 12 days later, helped rescue five more dogs.)

For two months prior, the HSUS Animal Rescue Team had prepared, coordinating enough equipment and staff to assist with the multiple seizures. In Elba, more than 20 dogs were discovered, many of them rail thin and heavily scarred. One pit bull bolted through an open window when authorities threw a flash bomb inside a suspect's home. As responders collected evidence and readied the dogs for their trip to safer quarters, the loose pit bull returned. "She was like, 'Don't forget me!'" says The HSUS's Daisy Balawejder, who coordinated sheltering efforts.

Once in temporary housing facilities, the dogs had their first taste of normalcy: a full water bowl, regular meals, and a comfortable place to sleep. Their road to recovery continues at a longer-term facility, where they get Kongs, food puzzles and ice treats, and daily doses of calming aromatherapy. For two puppies, round-robin sessions with volunteers was all it took to overcome their fear. "Once a dog has experienced affection from a person," Balawejder says, "that switch is turned on and they want more of it."

Prospects for YaYa, too, look promising. When Schindler picked her up from the hospital, her hearty tail wag spoke volumes.

NAME: Hazel

CASE HISTORY: Rescued from a Bellaire, Ohio, hoarding situation in March with 3 other goats, plus 58 dogs, 28 cats, 14 horses, 6 chickens, and 1 goose

The narrow dirt road dead-ended at the bottom of a hill, where a flood of dogs rushed toward vehicles from the Belmont County sheriff's office and The HSUS's Animal Rescue Team.

Beyond a handwritten sign warning "Trespassers will be SHOT," rescuers found more than 100 animals living among garbage, mud, and excrement. Dogs and cats were everywhere. Gaunt horses and goats stood in feces-layered enclosures. In a dark garage, as rescuers peered with flashlights under a tarp covering stacks of airline crates, they discovered two more cats, most likely forgotten. There were animal skulls and bodies—but not a scrap of food.

In one enclosure lay an emaciated goat with three other goats and a barking dog. No one knew how long she'd been down, but it had been long enough for her limbs to fold and contract. "She had really sad eyes, like she'd given up," remembers The HSUS's Ashley Mauceri, who envisioned the little goat unable to reach food in the rare times they were fed. Named Hazel by rescuers, she offered no struggle as they lifted her into the back seat of their truck.

At a temporary shelter set up on the Belmont County Fairgrounds, Hazel's recovery remained uncertain. "I didn't give her through the night," remembers fairgrounds superintendent Ron Ault, who helped care for the animals.

But food and basic care fueled Hazel's will to live. With Ault's help, volunteers built a makeshift sling that allowed them to lift her up and let her legs dangle. Gentle massages softened taut tendons and muscles. Slow stretching loosened stiff joints.

Once Hazel's legs could extend to the ground, treats were placed just out of reach to tempt her into pushing forward. Little by little, her strength returned.

Then a miracle happened: She walked. And soon, she was back to being a goat. "The first time she walked out of her stall, she promptly found a trash can, knocked it over, and proceeded to rummage through the trash," says HSUS contractor Lou Montgomery with a laugh.

For Ault, who lost a son in Iraq in 2008, helping the animals was energizing. As someone also suffering from arthritis, he found Hazel's determination inspiring. He built a temporary enclosure on his 50-acre property and adopted all four goats. Hazel and her buddies now play and munch hay and alfalfa, with goat pellets for dessert. Ault plans on fencing in 3 acres for his little herd. Until then, he walks them every day. "The first thing [Hazel] wants to do is get a mouthful of fresh grass," he says. "Then she'll pick up her pace. ... She loves to run."

ON THE IPAD:
Watch Hazel
walk again.



Hazel found sanctuary with animal lover Ron Ault, whose kindness and ingenuity helped lift her to recovery.



ANIMAL RESCUE UPDATES

Spuds the cattle dog mix was understandably freaked. His owner had just died. He'd been taken to a shelter. And less than 24 hours after being adopted, he escaped from his Montana yard.

For seven weeks, Perri Knize tried catching her wily new dog. She tried live traps. She tried a capture pole. She set up a trail camera. Finally, after Knize called The HSUS's Dave Pauli for help, Spuds' life on the lam came to an end. An expert on wildlife capture and handling, Pauli set a special trap and within 48 hours Spuds was home, sleeping soundly at Knize's feet.

Maybe the baby chimney swifts had grown too heavy. Maybe recent rain had weakened their nest. Whatever the cause, one fledgling fell through—down an old chimney and into an office at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

The smooth sides of the chimney's firebox prevented the little swift from climbing back to his parents. But luckily, a maintenance worker discovered his predicament and called The HSUS's Humane Wildlife Services for help.

When HWS director John Griffin arrived, he boosted the fledgling 12 feet up into the chimney in a makeshift nest he'd created from coconut fiber and attached to a long stem. Almost immediately, the fledgling clawed his way back to safety.