



AFTER: Large wheels on Ricky Bobby's home-made cart allow him to scramble over tree roots and splash through water at a nearby park.

NAME: Ricky Bobby

CASE HISTORY: Rescued along with 57 other dogs from a North Carolina puppy mill last February

The eight dogs arrived the night before her morning shift at CareFirst Animal Hospital in Morrisville, N.C. "It was as if we had all walked into a bad dream," remembers veterinary technician Megan Bliss of the sick poodles, Papillions, and Yorkies.

In the ICU, a dappled miniature dachshund paralyzed from the waist down caught her attention. Phoenix had a urinary tract infection, urine burns, and open sores on his back paws from dragging himself across the concrete floor of his enclosure. His teeth were so rotten, Bliss remembers, that they "looked like brown, green, and black wads of wet tissue paper."

The HSUS had helped rescue the dogs after buyers had complained to the Sampson County's Sheriff's Office about conditions in an online seller's facility. While the majority of dogs were taken to a temporary shelter, those with more serious medical conditions were transferred to CareFirst.

There, Bliss was drawn to Phoenix. "[He] had the most sensitive eyes," she says. It was those eyes HSUS rescuer Jennifer

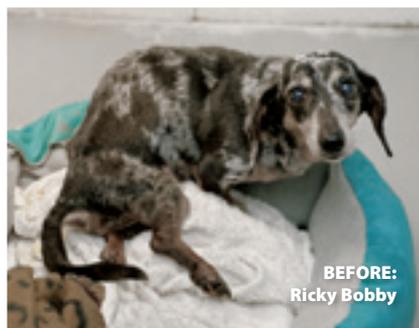
Kulina Lanese remembers, and how he stared at the cinderblock walls in his enclosure, as if "making himself invisible."

After surgery to remove all but four of his teeth, Bliss adopted the little dachshund. "It scared me to think that I would have to say goodbye to him." Remembering a client who'd once handcrafted a cart for their dog, she decided to do the same for Phoenix, using PVC pipe for the frame and, for the rest of the structure, zip ties, elastic hair bands, baby stroller wheels, and a mesh dog harness.

Now named Ricky Bobby (after Will Ferrell's racecar driving character in *Talladega Nights*), he loves zipping around at the park. "I can barely get his 'feet' fastened in before he wants to pull away and go!" Whenever people stop to ask about "RB," Bliss shares his story. The two even traveled to the North Carolina governor's mansion to help spread the word about puppy mills: Ricky Bobby's rescue marked The HSUS's 13th in the state since 2010.

Because RB doesn't use his cart inside the apartment, Bliss cinches a slick nylon bag around his lower half to protect him from scrapes. He's never far from his pal Tucker, Bliss's gentle Labrador retriever. The two cuddle, often chewing on the same toy. His other favorite activities: jumping like a pogo stick for treats and looking Bliss straight in the eyes and licking her face.

"He is such a joy and source of happiness in our home."



BEFORE:
Ricky Bobby

LOCATION: Weld County, Colorado

ANIMALS RESCUED: 48 black-tailed prairie dogs

As Lindsey Sterling Krank bailed water from her basement, her office line kept ringing off the hook. It was Thursday afternoon, Sept. 12—three days after a slow-moving storm began dumping record-breaking rains along the Colorado Front Range. Severe flooding was inundating parts of 17 counties.

The call was from a woman driving along Highway 52, about five miles south of the raging St. Vrain River. There was a flooded prairie dog colony. “You have to come get these prairie dogs; they’re all lined up, coming into the median in the road!” she told Sterling Krank, director of The HSUS’s Prairie Dog Coalition.

With roads closing behind and ahead of them, HSUS rescuers forged through roadblocks, arriving within the hour. “We could see prairie dogs strung out along the roadside,” says PDC program manager Ghia Speakman. “The fields were flooded on either side of the road [and] we could see a couple who’d already been hit by cars.”

The team swept down the road, scooping up prairie dogs and drying them off with a towel before placing them in hay-filled pet carriers: 1, 3, 15, and then 48 wet potatoes, survivors from an estimated colony of 200. The few who tried paddling away were easily caught. “They were so waterlogged they couldn’t really move,” says Sterling Krank. It was a cold day, too, with temperatures in the 40s, and they urgently needed warming.

The prairie dogs were taken to HSUS consultant Pam Wanek, who gave them the royal treatment: oats, sunflower seeds, lettuce, apple slices, and a cozy place to sleep. A week later, they were released in St. Vrain State Park, where HSUS contractor Chris Cahill had already helped relocate 75 prairie dogs away from a planned wetland area in the months leading up to the flooding.

Thanks to that relocation project, those prairie dogs, too, survived the storm. Their new digs—unlike their previous, low-lying colony—sat comfortably on higher ground.



HSUS contractor Chris Cahill holds one lucky flood survivor ready for release in Colorado.

OPPOSITE PAGE: MEREDITH LEE/ FOR THE HSUS; THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: JAKE VERZOSA/AP IMAGES FOR HSI; GHIA SPEAKMAN/THE HSUS.



LOCATION: Philippines

ANIMALS ASSISTED:

Scores of pets and farm animals

In the wake of November’s catastrophic typhoon in the Philippines, Ramon Venarta was desperate to find aid for Bubba. Eventually, taking a chance, he carried her shelter out to the street with a message written into the roof:

“Int. Humane Society Please Help Me!” He signed it: “Bubba.”

It worked. A photographer who had worked previously with Humane Society International spotted the message. And soon, HSI’s rescue team arrived with food, water, and a new leash for the young dog (shown above), bringing Venarta to tears.

Across the affected region, HSI also offered a mobile veterinary clinic, set up food and water stations for homeless animals, and rescued other pets left behind in the evacuation. For those who had fled, HSI provided a hotline to make rescue and care requests. “This is still an active rescue mission,” HSI’s Asia director Rahul Sehgal said in mid-November. “As time goes by it will become a long-term recovery program.”

ON THE IPAD: View additional rescue videos, photos, and stories.