

Coffee Break



Snakes on a Plane? What about Goats in the Shelter?

That was the question we posed for our first installment of “Coffee Break,” a new department designed to showcase your advice, wisdom, and tales from the wild side. And when we asked for stories of unusual or exotic animals, you told us about more close encounters than we could fit into these pages: with goats, pot-bellied pigs, chickens, emus, snakes—even a wayward wallaby and a five-foot-long iguana.

If you missed our first question, you still have plenty of chances to make your voice heard and see your name in *Animal Sheltering*. In each issue, we’ll ask a new question and print as many responses as we can in the magazine. Additional responses may also be posted at www.AnimalSheltering.org.

A citizen called in freaking out that she almost hit a kangaroo in the road. I’m thinking, yeah right, this is Texas, not Australia! She said the kangaroo was about three feet tall and hopped into the woods. So, to ease her mind, I set a trap for the wild hopping kangaroo (baited with exotic type foods recommended by our local zoo). I checked the trap the next day, and—nothing. So I rebaited the trap with fresh fruits and veggies. I went back the following morning to pick up the trap and say, “I tried,” and to my surprise, we had a wallaby in the trap! She was a very pretty animal with psychotic behavior, and I hope we never get a real kangaroo!

—Julie Rodriguez, City of Pearland Animal Control & Adoption Center, Pearland, Texas

A woman was visiting a farm, and they were about to put down the runt of a pig litter. She was horrified and took it home. Then she realized that she couldn’t keep a Yorkshire pig in an apartment and brought it to HSPC. I was able to find a home for him where he is a pet, not dinner, but he spent the weekend at the shelter. We were having a birthday party (we do parties every Sunday as part of our community outreach), and we put a bow on him and brought him to the party in a little basket. He was still puppy-sized. The little girls squealed as much as the piglet. We hear he shares a heated barn with an old horse and does frequent visits to nearby schools.

—Nancy Thaden, Humane Society of Pulaski County, Little Rock, Arkansas

We got a call on a five-foot alligator who turned out to be an iguana. No one came back to claim “Reptar,” and I invited my family in to see this beautiful creature. We do not have proper facilities to care for this type of animal and could not find a rescue at that time. My brother and sister, who are teachers, brought kids in to see. My adult daughter came in, and now I have a “grandiguana”—the most spoiled creature ever. When I babysit, I am given specific instructions on what time to mist and exactly what fruit to cut up when, as

well as how to garnish it and present it to Reptar. My 2-year-old grandson cannot leave the house without saying goodbye to the lizard.

—Maggie Skovera, Countryside Humane Society, Racine, Wisconsin

My father was recovering from open-heart surgery, and he had always wanted a golden pheasant. After surgery, he went into a serious and major depression. On a shelter visit I was asked to look at this lovely bird that had been brought in—it was a golden. I adopted it and, once home, put the crate on my father’s bed and said, “You need to get better so you can show us how to care for the bird.” Within days, he was up and helping with the bird and looking for another. The pheasant has lived here for six years, and both he and my father are doing well.

—Elizabeth Akers, Rhodesian Ridgeback Rescue, Concord, California

We got an animal control call about an unusual pigeon. He had a band on his leg; we tracked the numbers on it and found out he was a Giant Racer (weighing about six pounds), and he was from Waco, Texas. They can fly up to 600 miles. It seems he was just tired, and after a couple of days’ rest and a few good meals, we released him to fly back home. We had a lot of interest in the guy, whom we named Homer. During the research we learned that there are a lot of people who still send messages by these pigeons as a hobby.

—Angela Rye, Waverly Animal Shelter, Waverly, Tennessee

A small boy found a Patagonian cavy as a stray on his street and his mom brought her to the shelter. She stayed with us for about three months; we did not know what we were going to do with her. She had lots of fun chewing our shoelaces and running free in our office. I called everyone I could think of: zoos, wildlife refuges, even rabbit rescue groups. Finally, the children’s petting zoo in San Diego said they would take her. The staff at the shel-

ter all donated enough money to ship her down. I've received pictures and e-mails since then, and she is doing very well. She has gotten comfortable with a harness and is a wonderful addition. Not the strangest thing we have ever gotten, but certainly one of the most memorable.

—Denia Stevens, Humane Society for Southwest Washington, Vancouver, Washington

We recently took in a goat who was abusing her owner. She still has her horns, and even though she is just about the smallest pygmy goat I have ever seen, she is mean as can be and really likes to hurt you. Her owner was black and blue and could not enter the goat area without confrontation. For some reason Willow—that's her name—allows me to come into the goat/pony pen and do my chores and leaves me alone. She likes when I brush her, but then

she gets mad if I stop too soon. Ouch! I don't even put her on the website for adoption because I am not sure that she would not really hurt someone. She seems to be happy living with Muffin, another pygmy goat, and Bernie, an old pony. We can't even let people go into the goat area because of her anymore.

—Fran Freedman, Morning Starr Animal Sanctuary, Inc., Cornville, Arizona

A big turkey who a pet had gotten loose. I caught him and took him to my shelter. He fell in love with me and did the mating dance every time I came into the shelter. Before I found out it was the mating dance, I thought he was trying to get me. I think he was half-wild, but he was the biggest turkey I have ever seen. He had about a 10- to 12-inch beard.

—Linn Van Volkinburg, Albany Animal Shelter, Albany, Missouri

Our next question: When your work becomes overwhelming and you start to burn out, how do you regain a positive attitude and find the strength to continue?

Please submit your responses (250 words or less) at www.AnimalSheltering.org/coffeebreak or send them to Editor, *Animal Sheltering*/HSUS, 2100 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20037. **Your answer may be printed in a future issue of *Animal Sheltering*.** If your response is chosen for publication, you will be entered into a drawing to win a **free coffee break (valued at \$50)** for your organization. No donation or purchase is necessary to win; see www.AnimalSheltering.org/coffeebreak for contest rules, or send an e-mail or letter to the above addresses to request a printed copy.

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