



This is the Braxton County Animal Shelter in Sutton, WV. It is about as well run as a shelter can be. The pens are kept clean and the dogs are fed a high quality food. The animals are treated as humanely as possible, given the fact that they are in a shelter and that the shelter has a bare bones budget. However, in order to keep disease to a minimum, the sick, elderly, and otherwise less adoptable pups are regularly euthanized. That is, of course, unless a rescue like S&L promises to take them. . . . The shelter manager reaches out to the more reputable rescue groups to try to save as many as possible.

Lisa goes into each pen and assesses each pup individually. S&L must take puppies in order to be able to generate the funds to help the others. Anna, a young pit mix mom dog who has double cherry eye and a severe case of mange, would have been put down within a day or two. Her picture on the web did not reveal her sweet, gentle temperament. She came up on transport with us, along with several others who would have been “freezer dogs” by the end of the week.



It kills us to have to leave so many behind . . . We try to convince the manager to spare the Shitzu (she doesn't like men) and ol' Blue (he's old and has kennel cough) until we have this weekend's adoptions and can make some room for them at the rescue.



We hop into the shelter manager's SUV to go on a call. We can hardly get up the "driveway" that's all rutted and steep. This is what we found (the 'house', a run down trailer that is not in the picture, sits in-between these two scenes.) The young woman at home swears she "don't know what happened" to the 18 pups we were supposed to pick up. The ACO fears they have been tossed over the cliff to their death - or died in some other horrific manner. The "mom" of the household was "out huntin" . . .



We leave, make our way down the steep hill and continue to another home. On our way, two puppies run out into the street. The ACO stops to speak with the woman outside. She can only give us the two puppies because the mom dog (a Boston Terrier Mix) and the dad dog (a blind Elkhound) belong to her husband, who is off somewhere "drinkin". Of course, neither dog has been altered. We met her friend, who mentions that her husband might want to give us some beagle pups, now that she realizes we are a rescue and won't be putting the dogs in the shelter. The ACO calls him and the man agrees to meet us. We continue on our way to a family that has approximately 40 to 50 dogs - all chained outside to truck bumpers, dog houses, the trailer home, fence posts. . . They eventually give us 6 of the 7 puppies they currently have. Their teenage daughter, Amber, scooped one up and gave me a dirty look saying, "I'm keepin' this one!" and walked away. The following pictures show the mom dog, a lab mix chained to a truck bumper and some other shots of the trailer home and dog house where the puppies were born - and the 6 pups, here safe in our house. I can't stop thinking about the fate of that poor 7th pup.





It was raining, we were muddy, the dogs were filthy, dog kibble was thrown all around on the ground to “feed” the dogs - and this was one of the better situations in the county. These folks at least took their animals to the vet and were able to feed them because they paid for the dog food with their food stamps, so the ACO lets them be.

We left there and went to see the the man with the beagles. We weren't sure why he wanted to give them up as he told us, “they're pure bred - good huntin' dogs, good rabbit dogs.” We didn't tell him that we hope these pups will be curled up in someone's lap in NJ very soon - no huntin' anymore for them! There were 4 puppies and a momma. Two puppies had docked tails and he wanted to keep them. We later found out from the ACO that folks just chop off a puppy's tail with a hatchet. The man gave us the two puppies who had tails - a male and a female. He gave us the the mom dog, named Lady. We couldn't figure out why . . . now we think we know . . .the mom dog might be pregnant again - or something else is not right about her. We will find out soon from the S&L vet.



So, that's the story of my spur-of-the-moment decision to take a ride down to West Virginia with Lisa as part of the S&L Rescue Team. 48 hours that I will NEVER forget - and that might even change the direction of the rest of my life. I wanted to gather some information to guide me in my quest to “stop makin' the puppies” . . . Boy, did I do some “gatherin” on this trip. We went down to bring up 10 pups. We came back with 26 (20 puppies / 6 adults) and that's just one tiny drop (a small 3 square mile area) in a whole big bucket.