

# Dogs get new lease on life in New England

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With Gretchen's time nearing the end, her last chance was a ride to Massachusetts. Her last chance has become a new life.

Gretchen was one of the 13 dogs the Aiken County Animal Control shelter shipped to a no-kill shelter in Massachusetts through a partnership between the two shelters and a horse transport company.

Now, at least 10 of the dogs already have new homes in just a little more than a week.

Betty Bilton, director for the Northeast Animal Shelter, in Salem, Mass., said the animals arrived Feb. 4, after a 1,000-mile trek courtesy of Fairway Horse Transport.



Fairway had delivered horses to Aiken and offered to transport the pups - all of which were nearing their end time at the Aiken shelter - to the no-kill New England facility. Bilton was one of the first to greet the newest New Englanders when they arrived.

"The truck was really warm, so that was good. They were really happy when we opened the truck," she said.

Bilton said all of the dogs were examined by a local vet, given a clean bill of health and then quarantined for 48 hours as required by state law. Once the two days had past, the race was on for eager pet-seekers to find new companions. Bilton said nice weekend weather brought people out to the shelter, and the pets' placement on their website also expedited the rapid adoption of the dogs.

"We were thrilled," she said.

Gretchen, a wiry, gray terrier mix, was the 10th dog to find a home. She was picked by a couple who had just lost a dog to cancer.

"It was a perfect match," Bilton said.

Bobby Arthurs, chief enforcement officer for Aiken County Animal Control, said he was ecstatic to hear so many had found a home so soon.

"I'm excited about that. I was pleased to hear that. It was a very warm feeling," he said.

Both Arthurs and Bilton have said they hope to continue the program, and that the horse transport company has agreed to continue to assist.

"I sure want to (continue the animal transport) on this end. I sure hope everybody down there agrees. It's a win-win situation all around. We have room, and they need homes," Bilton said.

For Arthurs, he is banking on that coming through.

"I'm looking forward to it. If I'm given the OK, we'll do it again," he said.