

Trip gives dogs a second chance at life

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Thirteen dogs at the Aiken County Animal Control shelter got a new lease on life Tuesday, as well as a ride to Massachusetts.

A horse transport company that had delivered horses to Aiken let the pooches tag along on the 1,000 mile journey to Salem, Mass., where they will await adoption at a no-kill facility, the Northeast Animal Shelter.

Bobby Arthurs, chief enforcement officer for Aiken County, said moving the 13 dogs would free up additional space for other adoptable animals, as well as save these dogs' lives.



"Some of these guys, they've been here a month. They were on the (euthanasia) list," he said.

The transport company - Fairway Horse Transport out of New Hampshire - loaded up the dogs Tuesday morning before heading north, where they hoped to arrive mid-day today. This is the second haul of animals from South Carolina, the first being a dozen from Camden last year. Fairway began moving animals to shelters up north following Hurricane Katrina, when thousands of pets were left behind by evacuees. The dogs will make the trip corralled in a front stall of the trailer. A makeshift pen was set up to separate a couple of dogs that were not playing well with others. A hay floor will keep the dogs warm for the trip, and buckets of water were available to keep them hydrated.

Driver Dave Amato said adding some cargo to the trip back home makes sense, as they can utilize the open space in the trailer.

"We're carrying down full and heading out empty," he said.

Amato, along with fellow driver Kevin Castino, will drive straight through. And while they may normally haul horses, the dogs aren't that much different to them.

"The horses are bigger. That's about it," Castino said.

The Northeast Animal Shelter's Laurie McCannon said the dogs would be quarantined for 48 hours upon arrival, after which shelter staff will try and find homes for them. Fortunately for these reprieved rascals, that probably won't be hard, and they will soon have new homes somewhere throughout New England. McCannon credits the region's aggressive spay and neuter campaigns at keeping pet numbers manageable and demand for shelter dogs high.

"Around here, we don't have a lot of stray dog issues," she said.

Arthurs said he still has more than 150 dogs housed at the facility. However, moving this large a number of potential pets is a big day for the shelter. He said even the dogs sensed something big was happening in their world.

"They've been antsy all morning. They know something's going on."