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LOCAL RESCUES FIGHT FOR RETURN OF DOGS FROM R&R RESEARCH

July 23, 2009 (Newaygo, MI). Prince, a two-year-old Shepherd and Australian Shepherd mix, is listed on Lake Haven's website (www.lakehavenrescue.org) as their featured pet available for adoption. Prince was originally turned into the Montcalm County Animal Shelter. Lake Haven, a local animal rescue group, planned on rescuing Prince from the shelter. But before that could happen, Prince was taken by class b animal dealer, R&R Research.



**Photo: Prince,
rescued from R&R
Research**

Lake Haven Director, Cheryl McCloud, states Montcalm's shelter policy entails that a new arrival is available for adoption to the public on its first day after the required hold period; rescues are then allowed to remove an animal on the second day; and on the third day, a research dealer is allowed to remove an unclaimed animal. R&R Research, however, did not wait until the required third day to remove Prince. Because of that, "Prince was doomed for a life of experimentation," says McCloud. However, through much effort, he was released from the animal dealer and is now in the care of Lake Haven. "He was saved from a life no animal should ever have to endure."

Rescue groups are now desperately trying to save another dog, Soup. Soup is an English Setter that was surrendered to the Montcalm County Animal Shelter by her owner after being hit by a car. Her foot was injured, and the owner could not afford to have it fixed. "Little did they know, she would end up in a dog lab," says McCloud. "One of my problems with the Montcalm County Animal Shelter has always been they do not disclose to those dropping off animals that there is a good chance their animal will go to a lab."

Laurel Barrick of Rolling Rescue, a transport rescue, had made arrangements to have Soup taken to the vet. From there, she was to be transported to Michigan English Setter Rescue, a Port Huron group which specializes in English Setters. This had been pre-arranged with Montcalm County employees. However, like Prince, Soup was also snatched up by the research dealer before the rescue had a chance to save the pooch.

McCloud says R&R Research owner, Jim Woudenberg, “took Soup from the shelter even though he knew the dog had a home. To me, this shows a lack of integrity.” As for the shelter staff, she says, “One has to question why they would send these dogs off for a torturous existence when there were rescues lined up. What could possibly be their motive? Many people are trying to get Soup back—except the people who are paid to shelter and protect her, the Montcalm Animal Shelter Director and her staff.”



Photo: Soup, removed from shelter by R&R Research

Montcalm commissioners voted to end R&R Research's controversial contract with Montcalm County. The contract expires on August 1st. However, despite public outcry and R&R's long list of animal welfare violations, the class b dealer still has a five-year contract with Gratiot County that does not expire until 2014.

The number of class b animal dealers has dwindled over the past several years (from 100 to 9) as the biomedical community has largely moved away from using random source dogs and cats, and educational institutions have increasingly turned to non-animal teaching methods. Four of the nine dealers are currently under intense USDA (US Department of Agriculture) investigation, including R&R. R&R has continued to violate the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), including several incidents where animals were obtained from illegal sources.

Meanwhile, the fate of the English Setter, Soup, is still up in the air. “She deserves the opportunity to have her injury fixed and be available for adoption,” McCloud asserts. “This is not a dog that belongs in a lab being experimented on. This is not an unwanted animal. This is an animal that would make a wonderful pet for someone.”

Lake Haven is a non-profit volunteer-run animal rescue shelter dedicated to the care and adoption of homeless and/or injured dogs, cats, kittens and puppies in the West Michigan area. Lake Haven is a recognized 510(c)3 organization.

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