

A Day in the Life of a PETA Fieldworker

Three PETA Staff Members Share Their Experiences

A Firsthand Look at the Lives of 'Backyard Dogs'

by Bridget Dillon

Because I've lived in cities my entire life, I had no idea how common "backyard dogs" are in rural communities across the U.S. or what life is like for them. When I visited PETA's headquarters in Norfolk, Virginia, to spend time helping animals in the surrounding area, I was shocked to see so many dogs who are forced to live outside 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in all weather conditions. During my time with PETA's fieldworkers, I met dozens of these "outdoor dogs." I expected them to be aggressive because they had been neglected, but they were so sweet and thrilled to receive attention and affection. Some were terrified of humans but quickly warmed up to us after we gave them some treats and played with them. It makes no sense to me that people choose to get dogs, only to chain them up outside and forget about them.

One of the animals I can't stop thinking about is **Pup Pup**.

We found him terrified, surrounded by garbage, and chained to an abandoned truck top in someone's backyard. His chain was so short that he could take only a few steps in any direction, and he had no shelter, bedding, or fresh food or water. PETA's fieldworkers always encourage people to let their animals live indoors and to make them a part of the family, but unfortunately, chaining dogs is legal in some areas, and owners can't always be persuaded to change their ways



regarding their animals. So the fieldworkers do what they can to improve the animals' lives as much as possible. The next day, we stopped by to check on Pup Pup and give him some much-needed tummy rubs. From the moment he saw us, he had the happiest tail wag and the biggest smile. I'm sure he was hungry (his owner had been feeding him canned beans), but he didn't eat the food that we gave him right away because he didn't want to leave our sides. Like most dogs, all he wants is for someone to love him and play with him and to be allowed to live indoors.

PETA's fieldworkers will continue to check on Pup Pup.

A Glimpse Into the World of Forgotten Dogs

by Helena Soh

When my supervisor offered me the opportunity to take PETA's social media team from sunny Los Angeles to freezing-cold Virginia to help chained "backyard dogs," I initially felt intimidated. I wasn't sure that I was ready to see animal suffering firsthand.

PETA's fieldworkers do whatever it takes, no matter the weather conditions, to help make life a bit better for neglected and abused dogs, cats, and other animals in the area around our headquarters in Norfolk, Virginia. Parts of this area are among the poorest in the country, so PETA staffers often help animals who are very much in need. And because it's still legal in many places to keep dogs chained outdoors continuously, they've been visiting some of these dogs for years.

It's hard to put into words what I witnessed on what, to a PETA fieldworker, was an "average workday," because we saw so many animals in need. But one of the dogs who struck a chord with me was **Buster**.

She's a 10- or 11-year-old dog who has lived outdoors in a small pen all her life, with virtually no contact with anyone. When we pulled up, she ran and jumped for joy, and as we approached her



pen, she threw herself against the fence to get closer to us, even sticking her head through the holes. The water in her bucket was completely frozen.

We dismantled the fence, which was so old that tree roots were growing through it, so that her guardian would have access to her in case of an emergency. This would also allow him to start walking her, since he seemed receptive to the idea.

We gave her guardian a leash and gave Buster a proper doghouse, treats, fresh water, and a bowl, and I showered her with as much love as I possibly could. Given her enthusiasm and love of cuddling, one would never suspect that she's had so little contact with humans. I'll remember her and the joy on her face forever.

How PETA Helps Dogs Who Need It the Most

by Ashley Frohnert

I eagerly anticipated my trip to PETA's headquarters in Norfolk, Virginia, where I spent time helping chained "backyard dogs" alongside PETA fieldworkers. At home, I have two dogs who are my whole world, and I can't imagine treating these loving, thinking, feeling beings as if they were little more than lawn ornaments.

PETA's fieldworkers always encourage people to welcome their animals into their homes and treat them as members of the family, but they're also pragmatic. The straw that they deliver for the dogs who will remain outdoors won't freeze if it gets wet during the winter, as blankets would. And the doghouses that they provide help protect these dogs from both the bitterly cold temperatures of winter and the sweltering heat of summer.

Over the course of three days, I accompanied the rescue workers as they visited 22 dogs. I felt such a mix of emotions, from confusion to sadness and from gratitude to heartbreak. Meet one of the animals I'll be thinking about for the rest of my life: **Sophie**.



She was probably the cutest little puppy I had ever seen. I was so surprised when we entered the trailer's backyard and saw a teeny-weeny, 10-week-old white puppy chained to a wooden pallet. My first reaction was "OMG, a puppy!" But that gleeful thought disappeared when I realized that she was already a bit scared of people, probably because she had received little to no attention. It was painful to think that at 10 weeks old, she was already being chained up outside 24 hours a day, seven days a week and that this was how she was going to be spending the rest of her life.



Her guardian had asked us to spay Sophie and to provide her with a free doghouse, which we were delivering that day, to protect her from the wind, rain, cold, and heat. It puzzles me that someone would choose to get a puppy without being able to provide for her.



As we were setting up Sophie's new house, I hugged, kissed, petted, and ran around with this adorable puppy. Before leaving, we gave her a meal and some more much-needed love.