

Abandoned animals find home at Parker rescue farm

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When animals are no longer wanted or cared for, Lynda and John Edwards give them a loving home.

Every animal in their barnyard has a heartbreaking story. There is Molly the zebu, a sacred cow from India that, despite being perfectly healthy, was going to be euthanized when the Denver Zoo closed its Krall exhibit. There is Fudgie, a plump, 15-year-old Chihuahua that was among 15 rescued “bait dogs” used to rile up pit bulls before a fight. There are the three roosters that were dumped over the fence and into the barnyard a month ago. Countless others have been abused or neglected.

There are so many creatures at the Edwards Foundation for Rescued Animals just east of Parker that its proprietor is unable to say exactly how many are on the 5-acre property. Regardless, the animals have gotten a second chance at life and even forged some unlikely friendships with each other.

It’s a common theme in the Edwards household, where foster children were raised before the animals took over. The Edwardses continue to help those in need, as long as they donate some of their time and effort. The large-animal rescue is run entirely by volunteers, including high school students who perform community service, referrals from the juvenile courts and special-needs adults looking for a project.

Most of the volunteers come to the rescue in the rural-residential Sierra Vista subdivision without knowing a thing about how to take care of farm animals. By the time they leave, they are skilled at cleaning, brushing and feeding a variety of animals.

“We couldn’t do it without volunteers,” Lynda Edwards says.

One volunteer, in particular, has dedicated herself to the no-kill shelter. Diane Ham, known to Edwards as “the fowl lady,” arrived two years ago and has since come nearly every morning to pitch in where she is needed. Ham didn’t know anything about taking care of birds, but learned how to nurse the ducks, turkeys, hens and roosters back to health through research and hands-on experience. Ham has become part of the extended family.

“I feel at home here,” she said.

Of course, the volunteers are quickly introduced to the colorful cast of characters in the barnyard. Millie, an overly friendly llama, likes to dole out lip-smacking smooches. Goldie and Dealer, two

aging horses, sniff wildly at visitors and tag along out of sheer curiosity. And Pancake, an ornery and authoritative goat, runs the yard by welcoming newcomers with repeated head butts. Edwards even gives out certificates to victims who survive Pancake's "special loving."

The Edwards Foundation for Rescued Animals was created about six years ago after John Edwards, a retiree seeking to spend his added freetime wisely, began volunteering at different animal-related venues each day. He eventually brought his work home with him and the nonprofit rescue quickly grew. The Edwardses planned to focus on large animals, but couldn't say no to the smaller ones.

"We don't like to take in cats or dogs," Lynda Edwards says with a wry laugh as Sam, a pup from the Dumb Friends League, scurries around her feet.

Close to Sam is a black kitten comfortably bathing himself on a cushioned chair. Just a few weeks before, he was found abandoned underneath a trash bin at a local Starbucks and was brought in with open arms. Edwards and Ham attempt to count how many cats are kept in the house, on top of the three outdoor cats, but are unable to come to a definitive answer.

Things aren't always easy. The poor economy caused many volunteers to find paying jobs and the price of hay has skyrocketed, leading to more abandoned horses and higher costs for the rescue. And in an effort to find permanent homes for as many animals as possible, the foundation doesn't charge an adoption fee. It relies heavily on donations.

For more information, visit www.edwardsanimals.com.