

Doggie airlift gives small canines a second chance

Lineups form for California castoffs at Edmonton Humane Society

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Published: Sunday, February 14, 2011

Adoptions started Sunday for a group of 58 lucky chihuahuas, terriers and poodle mixes who were rescued from Southern California animal shelters.

The dogs, ranging in age from eight months to six years, were flown from Los Angeles to Edmonton Friday aboard a private Gulfstream III. The “freedom flight” transferred 38 dogs from the Mary S. Roberts Pet Adoption Centre in Riverside, California, and 20 more dogs from the L.A. SPCA.

The flight was arranged by Janet Folk of Orange Dog Inc., a local organization that moves pets from overcrowded shelters to areas where they can more easily find homes.

Shawna Randolph, a spokeswoman for the Edmonton Humane Society, said this isn't the first time the organization has helped bring dogs to Edmonton.

“Two and a half years ago one of our volunteers was in Fresno and she discovered that around 11,000 dogs were being euthanized there every year,” Randolph said. “There was an over population problem especially with small breed dogs.”

Over six weeks, beginning in October 2008, Lori Oshaneck brought back 30 dogs from the Central California SPCA to the humane society. It became known as the California Canine Cuties Animal Transfer Program and since then more than 400 dogs have been saved over six trips, five of which were organized by Orange Dog Inc.

"We thought it was a good opportunity to be a constant supplier of small breed dogs in the Edmonton area," Randolph said.

All dogs from the humane society, including their most recent additions, are neutered or spayed and go through medical and behavioural testing.

Forty of the 58 new dogs have already passed behavioural testing and 17 were put up for adoption on Sunday, all of which were taken home.

Randolph said there were people lined up four hours before they opened their doors on Sunday afternoon, but it's likely that some of them left with other animals.

"Alberta-born animals benefit from this program too," Randolph said. "All adoptions spike when we bring in the California dogs."

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