

# REBEL

By Jill Posanski, Humane Officer

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In February 2007, when our area received its whole dose of winter in two weeks, a woman called anonymously, concerned about a dog. Due to her occupation, she could actually have gotten into trouble from her employer for reporting anything outside of her designated duties. (Her secret is safe with me - I never even got her name!) She told me that a very thin dog was tied to a barn and gave me an address, asking me to check on the dog.

Due to the minus 14 degree temps I went right away. What I found was a fuzzy dog face peeking out from a huge doghouse, a shelter so big the dog would never have been able to warm it with body heat. The dog had no water or food, and I didn't even see any yellow snow or waste from the dog. Experience told me he hadn't been fed or watered in quite some time. His feet were raw, and his fur was matted in some places and completely missing in others.

A man by the barn came to talk with me. He said the dog, named Rebel, came from down south and belonged to a friend of the family. The friend never returned for the dog; phone numbers they had for him were disconnected.

I asked if the dog was friendly, and the man said he loved everybody. I felt the wirehaired dog -- it was like petting a skeleton! (Simply educating the current owner would not have been enough for this case.) The dog was having a hard time with the cold weather. He was close to emaciated with no muscle, except a little in his back legs, and no external body fat stores anywhere.

Since the property owners took care of the dog on their property for more than 10 days in a row, they legally were "Keepers of an Animal." Like an owner, a "Keeper" is responsible for feeding, vaccinations and licensing. They should have either provided for this dog, or asked the local animal shelter to take him.

The best thing about my job happened just then: the owners asked if I would find Rebel a good home, which I promised I would do. They signed a surrender document giving legal ownership of the dog to HAWS and I left with Rebel in my crate.

After three weeks in foster care through HAWS, Rebel wiggled his way into this humane officer's heart and home. After gaining weight he was neutered at HAWS' SNIP clinic, which really helped with his housetraining. Soon he graduated obedience class - we called it "charm school" - and he loved it!

Given the same circumstances, I hope we would all be like the worker who called. She called because she wanted to do the right thing. How can helping animals not ever be the right thing?! This article is my way of letting her know her call made a difference to Rebel, (aka Rebi Roo), and to me! My thanks to her and all the other callers who care enough to report concerns!



*To report animal abuse or neglect in Waukesha County please call 262-896-8300 and ask to speak to the Humane Officer.*