

Inside Kellie Pickler's 'Doghouse'

Singer says her pets, including a Chihuahua, Lab puppy and a monkey, are her family.

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Kellie Pickler is in love ... with a menagerie of pets, including her "metrosexual" Chihuahua MooMoo, Labrador Retriever puppy Nala, a python, and a cat named Pickles.

"I really have a circus," laughs the 22-year-old star to People. "When I first came to Nashville, I didn't have any friends or family out here."

Pets have always served as surrogate family of sorts for the singer, who hails from a troubled broken home in rural North Carolina. "Animals have filled so many voids," she says.

Pickler finished sixth on the fifth season of "American Idol," and laughs that her Chihuahua MooMoo is an unabashed clothes horse. "MooMoo has a lot of clothes and goes to the puppy parlor to get pampered," Pickler giggles.

And Pickler's pet peeve? People who don't understand her bond with animals. "I hate when people say an animal isn't going to heaven," she says. "I don't think you can look in a dog's eyes and think they don't have a soul!"