

Michael Vick's Former Dogs Recovering

The majority of the rescued dogs were deemed fit to be around people and are undergoing rehabilitation.

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Vick's former dogs bond with caretakers at the Best Friends Animal Society. Photos by Molly Wald, Best Friends Animal Society
As the last sentence was handed down Jan. 25, 2008, to the fourth and final co-defendant in the Michael Vick dogfighting scandal, the majority of the dogs seized from Vick's Bad Newz Kennels last year in Surry County, Va., have emerged from what many speculated would be a certain death sentence for the former fighting dogs.

Of the more than 50 pit bulls seized from Vick's property, 48 were determined to be safe around people, according to the nonprofit group BAD RAP (Bay Area Dog lovers Responsible About Pit bulls) that helped evaluate the dogs. Twenty-two of the dogs were sent to Best Friends Animal Society, a 33,000-acre animal sanctuary in southern Utah where staffers are working to rehabilitate and socialize the dogs in an effort to one day place them into permanent homes. Best Friends reports that the dogs are doing well in their new surroundings and are now referred to as the "Vicktory" dogs.

The remaining dogs have been placed with several other rescue groups and foster homes in various locations around the country.

Vick and his four co-defendants all pleaded guilty to federal dogfighting charges. The disgraced Atlanta Falcons quarterback was sentenced to 23 months in prison for his role in the scandal, which included bankrolling the operation and executing underperforming dogs. Vick was recently transferred to a minimum security prison in Leavenworth, Kan., to enter a drug treatment program which could reduce his sentence by as many as 12 months. Vick began serving his sentence in November 2007.

Co-defendants Quanis Phillips and Purnell Peace received 21 months and 18 months in prison, respectively. Co-defendant Tony Taylor received 2 months in prison; he was the first to plead guilty and cooperate with investigators. The final co-defendant, Oscar Allen, was sentenced on Jan. 25 to three years probation and was fined \$500 for his role, which included selling Vick a pit bull and attending the fights.

Vick and his co-defendants also face state dogfighting charges in Virginia. Vick's trial is slated to begin April 2.