

Pit Bull May Serve as Ambassador for Breed

The dog, emaciated when rescued, is recovering well in a Florida shelter.

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Courtesy Hillsborough County, Florida, Animal Services After a man in Florida was charged with animal cruelty and improper confinement of animals, an emaciated pit bull who was rescued by Hillsborough County Animal Services has plowed through bowls of food, received a blood transfusion, and may be selected for the shelter's Pitbull Ambassador Program. The dog, along with eight others, was found on the man's property living in squalor, says Marti Ryan, shelter spokeswoman.

An anonymous phone call about mistreated animals led to the arrest of the 32-year-old man, Ryan says. He was charged with one count of animal cruelty and five counts of improper confinement of animals.

Ryan says the dog had to be held up by investigators in order to eat during a veterinary assessment. The dog has gained weight, she says, and his health will continue to be monitored.

She says that depending on how well the dog recovers, he may be chosen for the Pitbull Ambassador Program. Dogs who make it into this program undergo extensive health and temperament screenings before they are adopted out. The goal is to debunk myths associated with the breed, she says.

The recovering pit bull, named Dog by his owner, was renamed Carmel. Also rescued from the man's property was a litter of five Catahoula-mix puppies, Ryan says, and other mixed-breed dogs.

"We had a happy ending to an otherwise unhappy story," she says, adding that the rescued puppies were adopted out at a pet adoption event.

To learn more about the Pitbull Ambassador Program, call the Hillsborough County Animal Shelter at 813-744-5660 or visit www.badrap.org