"It's a miracle that he's even alive," Moore says.

Moore's dream is to transfer Goblin to a wildlife reserve in West Africa. "With the life he's had, he deserves to finish it out in his native land."

Four guinea pigs from the seizure found homes far from Kentucky in the Washington, D.C., metro area, thanks to Elaine Fuerniss of Bourbon County Rescue—which is based in Paris, Kentucky, and holds adoption events in Frederick, Maryland.

Fuerniss says all the guinea pigs—three adults and a baby—were underweight when they arrived at her house but "went right to eating like little troopers." At the pet store, they had shared an enclosure with a group of turtles but, despite the risk of disease transmission in this dangerous setup, luckily did not get salmonella. A veterinary exam revealed that they had lice and skin infections. Treatment included an oral antibiotic given by Fuerniss twice a day, but she says "the medicine tasted good to them, which was fortunate." After about a month of treatment, free of lice and infections, the guinea pigs were ready for adoption.

Jordan Nikoloff of Springfield, Virginia, adopted two adult female guinea pigs (Tangerine and Clementine) and the baby (Peanut) from the seizure through Bourbon County Rescue. Nikoloff says her family—which includes her husband, Alex, and toddler son, Victor—wanted to bring home new guinea pigs after their previous pair passed away.

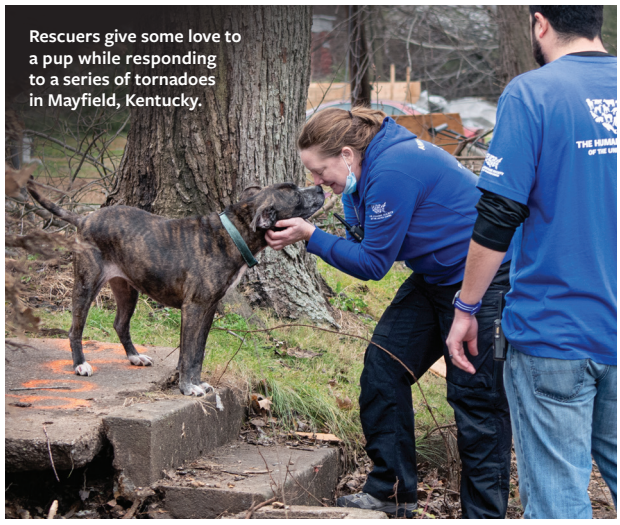
They had decided to adopt rather than shop at a pet store. When they spotted Abyssinian guinea pigs Tangerine and Clementine online—with their long, funky hairstyles—it felt like fate. "They were just so precious," Nikoloff says. "They actually look like one of our previous guinea pigs, so we were like, 'Oh my gosh, it's a sign.' "

Her new guinea pigs "have come a long way" from the Kentucky pet store, Nikoloff says. "They definitely had been pretty horribly neglected," she says, "... but they're as good as new now."

—James Hettinger



Shalimar Oliver, animal crimes manager for the Humane Society of the United States, removes Goblin from Tim's Reptiles and Exotics during the seizure in September.



Rescuers give some love to a pup while responding to a series of tornadoes in Mayfield, Kentucky.

Tornado terror in Kentucky

"MY STOMACH FLIPPED." Diane Robinson has witnessed a lot of disaster aftermath in her career, but the scene that awaited our Animal Rescue Team in Mayfield, Kentucky, was unlike any she'd seen previously. "This one really stands out," she says. "I've never seen a community quite this wrecked."

Robinson, Humane Society of the United States program manager of disaster response, arrived in Kentucky after the HSUS received a request for search and rescue assistance from the Mayfield-Graves County Animal Shelter in early December, shortly after a series of tornadoes carved a path of destruction through western Kentucky, killing nearly 80 people, displacing pets and flattening homes.



Working together, the HSUS and local responders rescued animals in Kentucky.

"It was really easy to imagine the very sudden terror people and animals were in," says Kirsten Peek, HSUS manager of media relations, who was also on scene.

When local responders found animals who needed help, they contacted our team. Rescuers then transported the animals from the wreckage and to the shelter—including one lucky pup spotted tied up behind a burned building. The sweet lab mix took to Robinson almost immediately and was excited to receive attention, including walks and treats. "He was just a joyful, curious guy," says Peek.

The team also worked with local groups to deliver pet supplies and chip in as needed. Robinson notes that the atmosphere in Mayfield was "surreal," but it was ultimately inspiring to witness the resilience of humans and animals alike. "Everybody that's there is just rallying around this community," she says. "It was really amazing."

—Danielle S. Tepper