

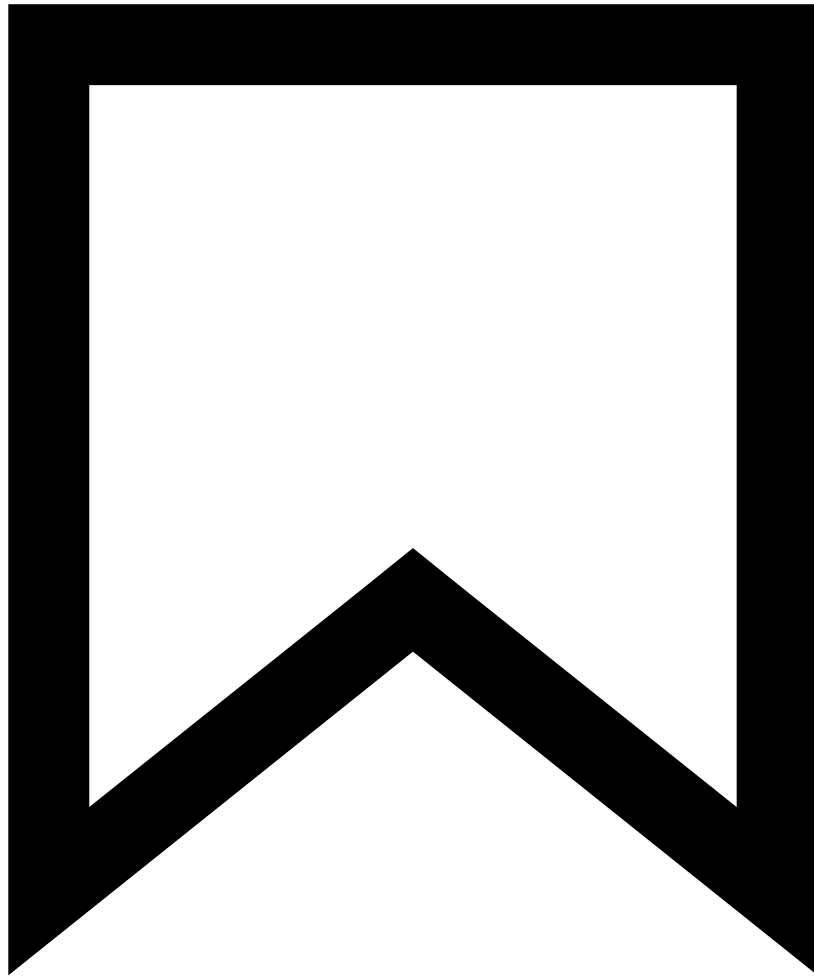
Profit, pain and puppies: Inside the rescue of nearly 4,000 beagles

How dogs being bred for research at Envigo became the target of the largest animal welfare seizure in the Humane Society's history

[Lizzie Johnson](#)

October 17, 2022 at 7:00 a.m. EDT

(Video: The Washington Post)



Save

CUMBERLAND, Va. — The first beagle out that day had brown eyes and a chunk missing from his left ear. His tail was a nub. It went from tan to white, then disappeared, maybe bitten off in a fight or caught in a cage door.

The 1-year-old had never been given a name — just an identification

code, 'CMG CKA,' tattooed in blue-green on the flap of his left ear. Like the thousands of other beagles bred for research at Envigo, a sprawling complex tucked deep in rural Virginia, he'd spent his entire life in a cage surrounded by the relentless barking of other dogs.

Now, on a Thursday in late July, that was about to change.

Uno, as he was immediately dubbed by his rescuers, and 3,775 other beagles were being sprung from their misery in an unprecedented animal welfare seizure.

After years of alarm from animal rights advocates and state legislators, after [U.S. Department of Agriculture inspectors](#) found maggot-infested kibble, 300 dead puppies and injured beagles being euthanized, after an undercover investigation by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, and after a lawsuit filed against Envigo by the Justice Department, the Indianapolis-based company had reached a settlement with the federal government. It agreed to shut down the Virginia breeding operation — admitting no wrongdoing and receiving no punishment or fines — rather than make what the CEO of its parent company called “the required investments to improve the facility.”

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In July, U.S. District Court Judge Norman K. Moon approved the surrender of Envigo's beagles to the Humane Society of the United States, giving the nonprofit group just weeks to organize the biggest rescue in its 67-year history.

“There's been nothing, ever, like this. Just the sheer volume of dogs,

or really, any animal," said Kitty Block, the Humane Society's president and chief executive.

What followed was two months of beagle mania, as people across the country showered the Humane Society with \$2.2 million in donations and clamored to adopt the dogs. [Prince Harry and Meghan Markle](#) took in a beagle. So did the governor of New Jersey and the chief meteorologist at a Virginia news station.

But the beagle emancipation was cloaked in secrecy. Almost no one was allowed to see the dogs leave Envigo.

John Ramer pets Uno in his kennel after he became the first beagle freed from Envigo on July 21, 2022.
(Video: John Ramer)

On the day Uno was released with 431 other beagles, rescue groups from Wyoming, Southern California and Northern Virginia were waiting to take them. They'd met with U.S. marshals at a location they weren't allowed to disclose, said John Ramer, executive director of Kindness Ranch Animal Sanctuary. Their IDs were checked. Then the strict rules for the transfer of the dogs were laid out.

Photos and videos were forbidden. So were cellphones. The rescuers were banned from talking with Envigo's employees. When the meeting with the marshals ended, Ramer said, the rescuers drove to the breeding facility in Cumberland, about 50 miles west of Richmond. As lawyers in suits looked on, workers rolled out scores of beagles in carts — or carried them from their cages individually — to a Humane Society representative, who plopped them into the rescue workers' arms.

When Ramer was handed Uno, the longtime rescuer started crying. He only had a few seconds to process the significance of this moment. He believed the beagles — sold to laboratories around the world for prices that could reach nearly \$1,000 per dog, according to company receipts from 2020 — had been saved from certain death.

Ramer loaded Uno into a crate, sliding the limp, 18-pound beagle to the side of the transport van he'd brought from Wyoming. Ramer, 50, dried his eyes and went back for the next dog.

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Once the van was full, Ramer and his wife, Katy Collins, drove down Envigo's long gravel driveway and out the gated entrance, past a surveillance camera. "YOU ARE BEING WATCHED AND RECORDED," a sign warned. The cacophony of thousands of barking dogs, concealed behind a tall chain-link fence topped with razor wire, faded.

On the long drive back to Wyoming, the two dozen male beagles, known for their characteristic howling and baying, huddled in their crates. Most of them made no sound. Except for Uno, Ramer said. He wouldn't shut up.

"He has a fantastic baritone howl and deep beagle bay," Ramer reported from the road. "He gets really excited when we stop and check the crates. His tail is wagging and slapping. My wife swears he knows his name already."

A beagle makes its way down a conveyor belt from a Wings of Rescue plane in Portland, Maine. (Peg Keyser for the Animal Refuge League of Greater Portland)

John Ramer prepares to pick up the first load of beagles from Envigo on July 21. (Ryan M. Kelly for The Washington Post)

The beagles who'd survived Envigo were greeted with a wave of feel-good stories on television, news websites and social media. But no one knew how damaged the dogs might be, physically and emotionally.

While there were fears about the 20 litters of puppies that emerged that first day, it was the adult dogs in the most obvious distress. There was Nervous Nellie, a jittery 2-year-old named for her anxious demeanor. Juniper, a 5-year-old with five puppies and few teeth, who recoiled at loud noises and abrupt movements. Nefertiti, 7, who humped other dogs when she got overwhelmed.

They had been raised on a 322-acre campus ringed by woods and open fields, with birdsong lilting through the air. But the beagles had never experienced it. Their lives had been spent on concrete or wire grating, according to USDA reports and Humane Society officials. Their teeth were rotted. Their bodies were scarred. They'd never worn a collar or walked on a leash. They'd never heard music or felt the crunch of an autumn leaf underfoot.

They'd never even stepped on grass.

The beagles were entering a new world: of vacuum cleaners, blenders, laughing children, fireworks, police sirens, toys, couches, belly rubs, love. They'd have to learn how to be real dogs — if that was possible at all.

Swaddled in a fluffy white towel, Nervous Nellie was carried into the fenced backyard of Homeward Trails in Northern Virginia.

It had only been a few hours since she and 20 other beagles had left Cumberland in the back of the rescue group's transport van.

At Envigo, Nellie had bred puppies that were sold to laboratories as soon as they were weaned. Her rescuers didn't know how many litters she'd had, but her teats were pink and swollen, as if she'd recently finished nursing.

What was clear was that Nellie was traumatized by her past. Her facial expression radiated fear — brows furrowed, eyes bulging, ears flattened. She favored the right side of her mouth, where she was missing four molars, likely from chewing on the bars of her enclosure, a veterinarian said later.

Nellie pressed her wet nose into the fabric of the blue-shirted shelter worker holding her as she was gently lowered onto a patch of ornamental rock in the yard. The towel — intended to help with her anxiety, though she also smelled terrible — was pulled away.

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Nellie froze. Her tail folded between her legs. Her belly sunk to the ground.

"Good job," whispered the rescue worker, crouching down beside her. "Good job, honey."

Nellie watched as her cage mates staggered awkwardly across the

yard. One mouthed a worn yellow tennis ball. Another stuck her nose over the lip of a plastic kiddie pool, recoiling at the sensation of cool water.

A few minutes later, Nellie ventured onto the grass with them, her legs flinging out at odd angles. She didn't know how to stand on solid ground.

Behind her, the screen door of the converted brick house clattered open. More blue-shirted staff members carried beagles down the porch's five steps, past a dozen camera-wielding journalists capturing each moment.

Nellie scuttled toward the fence. She felt safer there, away from the hubbub. A few feet away, a dog trainer spritzed water from a spray bottle at Nefertiti — rotten teeth, torn ear — for humping another beagle, who stiffened and growled at her. Newt, the only male among the group, tried to get in on it. More spraying.

Dog trainer Janice du Plessis pets Nami at Homeward Trails Animal Rescue on July 27. (Bonnie Jo Mount/The Washington Post)

Beagles explore the yard after being released from their crates at Homeward Trails Animal Rescue on July 21. (Ryan M. Kelly for The Washington Post)

Nellie sidled down the fence toward Sue Bell, 52, the executive director of Homeward Trails and a self-described "beagle addict."

Bell had been among the first to see Envigo at close range in February, after executives acknowledged the facility was overcrowded and agreed to release about 500 "surplus" beagles. Homeward Trails had taken 47 and found homes for all of them.

Now they'd do the same for another 95 beagles, returning to Envigo twice more over the summer alongside rescue groups from 28 states to pick up newly liberated dogs.

"What d'ya think?" Bell asked Nellie, extending her hand. "Hi! Oh my gosh, hi!"

Nellie stared at her. She took a few tentative steps forward and sniffed at her palm. Then, uncertain, she turned away.

Wisconsin Humane Society foster specialist Lauren Zimmer places a beagle puppy back in a crate on Aug. 9. (Joshua Lott/The Washington Post)

Three years earlier, a drone had flown over the beagle breeding facility in Cumberland, offering a glimpse of a place that had existed for more than six decades but had rarely faced scrutiny.

In the nearly [five-minute video](#), posted online in July 2019 by animal rights group Showing Animals Respect and Kindness, the outdoor cement enclosures were stained with urine and feces. Beagles jumped against the chain-link walls as some fought with each other for dominance. One dog ate a pile of poop. Another walked laps around its cage.

The keening of the dogs was overpowering.

Footage shot of the Cumberland facility in 2019 by the animal rights group Showing Animals Respect

and Kindness. (Video: Showing Animals Respect and Kindness)

Drone pilot Steve Hindi recorded the footage over two days. At that point, the facility — part of a [global animal testing market](#) valued at \$10.7 billion in 2019 — was owned by the pharmaceutical company Covance. Within weeks of the drone flight, the 52,000 square-foot facility switched hands after part of Covance was acquired by Envigo.

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A spokesperson for Envigo's corporate parent, Inotiv, said the company "took numerous steps to improve the facility upon purchase," including investing \$3 million for better treatment rooms, new X-ray equipment and "innovative play yards for the canines."

The spokesperson noted that Envigo received no citations after a USDA inspection in August 2019 and blamed the "drone incursion" for the agitation of the dogs, alleging the footage was recorded illegally.

Hindi denied he'd done anything illegal and said the drone was too far away for the dogs to notice it. He was appalled by what he recorded.

"These are companies that have, and make, a lot of money. I would've thought that while the conditions might have been rather sad because you're raising animals for laboratory use, it would be better than some kind of backwoods puppy mill."

A fence topped with razor wire at the entrance to the Envigo breeding facility in Cumberland, Va. (Ryan M. Kelly for The Washington Post)

But the company always maintained that it treated the beagles well. "At Envigo, animal welfare is a top priority," it said in one presentation to Virginia officials. "We adopt a humane and compassionate approach."

Built in 1961, the breeding operation featured 27 long, low-slung metal buildings used for whelping and housing about 5,000 beagles in cages and cement runs. The campus had its own waste water treatment plant and incinerator, one full-time veterinarian and about 25 employees.

How are animal research and breeding operations regulated?

It became the nation's second-largest breeder of what the industry

calls "purpose-bred canines."

Thousands of beagles were sent from Cumberland to laboratories around the globe, according to court affidavits, as well as [American research universities](#), the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Soon after the drone footage was released, a USDA report from a 2017 inspection [began circulating](#).

During a routine, two-day visit in August of that year, inspectors noted that one female beagle had an orange-sized mass on her mammary gland. Two other beagles had painful skin conditions. A fourth beagle had "a bleeding wound" on his paw.

Inspectors found enclosures with floors that were worn, rusted, or "broken completely off," according to the six-page report. Beneath the cages in one building, feces was piled "several inches deep" and crusted with black and white mold. Insects or larvae were "found in the feed in all of the buildings," the report said.

The USDA, which did not impose any fine or penalty, declined to comment.

One former Envigo employee, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said USDA visits created havoc. "Everyone was always in a panic" during the inspections, the ex-worker said. "We knew the place was not up to code."

The company responded by saying, "Every employee of Envigo is trained and encouraged to report Animal Welfare concerns to an anonymous, third-party service." Those reports would have been

investigated and corrected if confirmed, Inotiv said.

The drone video and USDA report caught the attention of Virginia state Sen. William M. Stanley Jr. (R-Franklin), who became known as “Senator Beagle” for his efforts to protect the Envigo dogs.

Virginia state Sen. William M. Stanley Jr. with Dixie, left, and Daisy, right, He adopted the beagles from Envigo before its shutdown. (Bonnie Jo Mount/The Washington Post)

In early 2020, [he proposed legislation](#) to ban the breeding of canines in Virginia for testing. But the bill failed. So did a second piece of legislation, which would have allowed Virginia to hold Envigo to the same standards as a commercial dog breeder.

The medical research community opposed Stanley’s legislation.

“Research on dogs has, and continues to lead to, life-preserving and

enhancing treatments in the areas of diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, organ transplantation," Elizabeth Hooper, a spokeswoman for Virginia Tech, told Virginia lawmakers during [a Senate committee hearing](#) on Feb. 4, 2020. The university, which shares a joint veterinary college with the University of Maryland, had purchased beagles from the Cumberland facility before.

Meanwhile, Envigo argued that there was nothing amiss at the breeding operation. In an op-ed published in the [Virginia Mercury](#) on May 8, 2020, Helmut Ehall, the senior vice president of veterinary services, wrote that Envigo was "proud of the way it cares for the dogs housed at its Cumberland site. ... We welcome inspection by Virginia state authorities under appropriate animal welfare guidelines."

Stanley decided to take him up on it.

On Aug. 27, 2020, Stanley showed up at the facility with a fellow state senator, David W. Marsden (D-Fairfax), who immediately noticed the smell, calling it "a little off-putting."

"We met with the veterinarian and other people, and they convinced us that they cared about the animals," Marsden said. "They said they were just having trouble getting employees."

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Near the end of their hour-long tour, Stanley noticed four cages of puppies waiting on a loading dock. He approached a carrier and stuck his fingers through the wire.

"This one dog rested her face on the palm of my hand and looked at

me," Stanley said. "I said, 'This dog is too nice to be experimented on. I want to buy her.' "

Stanley named the 3-month-old puppy Daisy. Later, he'd adopt a second beagle, Dixie. But 145 miles southeast, at PETA's national headquarters in Norfolk, the rescue of one or two Envigo beagles wasn't enough for Daphna Nachminovitch, senior vice president of cruelty investigations.

"The best way to know the truth is to be there," Nachminovitch said later.

She decided to send an undercover investigator to Cumberland to see what was happening when the USDA wasn't around.

The investigator, who agreed to speak with The Washington Post on the condition of anonymity, moved to Virginia and applied for an animal caretaker position at Envigo. Then, in early 2021, she got an email with good news.

The \$12-an-hour job was hers.

Nefertiti's torn ear, pictured at Homeward Trails Animal Rescue. (Bonnie Jo Mount/The Washington Post)

On her first day at Envigo, the PETA investigator accompanied the caretaker training her to a small room, where a partially conscious beagle was sprawled on a table, slowly trying to lift its head. A third caretaker was euthanizing the dog because its tail was "rotten."

"The dog had got his/her tail stuck in between kennels, and it no longer had movement," the investigator wrote in her daily log, which PETA shared with The Post. "... The tail appeared to have black scabs on top of it."

The investigator watched as the dog was injected in the forelimb. It shuddered twice. The caretaker listened to the dog's heart with a stethoscope, poked it once in the eye, then pronounced it dead. The

dog's body was put in a red bag and sent to the incinerator — the final destination for an untold number of beagles.

"I had never seen anything like that before," the investigator said in an interview. "After work on my first day, I kinda sat there and was thinking, 'I don't understand how people think this is okay.' I had so many emotions going through my head. But I couldn't say anything."

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In the next few months, she witnessed more abuses, documenting each incident in a daily log that eventually grew to 264 typed pages.

She said she saw employees spraying down cages to clean them while beagles were still inside, soaking them, even in the winter. More than two dozen puppies died of cold exposure, the USDA found.

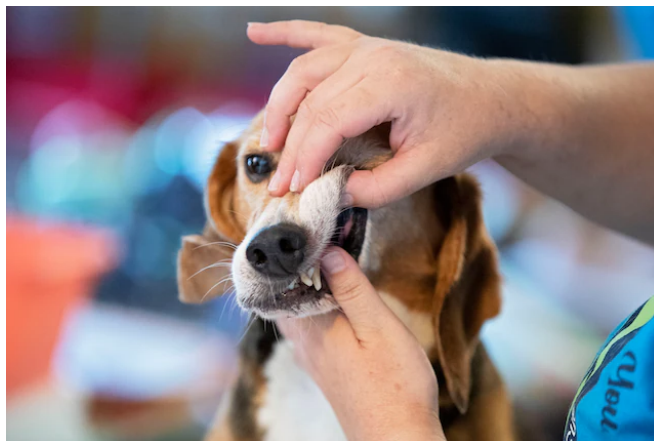
She saw puppies being put down without sedation, sometimes for no reason other than having a slight deformity, like an underbite, or being underweight.

She saw dogs living in their own filth. One beagle's paws took on the texture of algae, shredded and damp from standing in urine.

She saw nursing mothers denied food in a misguided attempt by caretakers to reduce their milk production and wean their puppies. Rather than take the food away completely, though, the feeders were flipped to the outside of the cage, meaning the mothers could still see and smell their kibble but were unable to reach it.



A staff member of Homeward Trails Animal Rescue displays a beagle's ear, previously tattooed at Envigo for identification purposes. (Ryan M. Kelly for The Washington Post)



Staff members give a beagle a health exam at Homeward Trails Animal Rescue on July 21. (Ryan M. Kelly for The Washington Post)

The constant stress in overcrowded cages made the beagles aggressive with each other — and sometimes murderous. One 10-week-old puppy's cause of death was listed as "evisceration."

Asked about each incident, Envigo's spokesperson responded that the company "disputes many of the allegations made by the PETA infiltrator," who failed to report her animal welfare concerns as employees are trained to do.

Within six months, PETA went to the USDA with its evidence. Agency spokesperson R. Andre Bell declined to comment on the

Oct. 14, 2021, meeting, referring all questions about the case to the Justice Department.

But 11 days later, a team from the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service arrived at Envigo's gate. Over a 10-month span from July 2021 to May 2022, the team conducted five inspections, citing the facility 74 times — the majority for serious violations.

Envigo appealed each report. Meanwhile, no action was taken against the company.

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Two U.S. senators, [Tim Kaine and Mark Warner](#), began urging the USDA to revoke Envigo's license.

"It is clear to us that Envigo has been derelict in its duty to provide for the humane care of its dogs," the Virginia Democrats wrote on March 31, 2022.

Seven weeks later, more than a hundred federal and state officials, law enforcement officers, rescue volunteers and veterinarians arrived at Envigo with a search warrant. Over five days, they seized health records, computers, and 446 beagles — about 10 percent of the facility's dogs — who were suffering life-threatening illnesses or injuries.

On May 19, the Justice Department filed suit against Envigo in federal court, accusing the company of serious and repeated violations of the Animal Welfare Act and seeking an immediate halt to its mistreatment of dogs.

“Envigo’s disregard for the law and the welfare of the beagles in its care has resulted in the animals’ needless suffering and, in some cases, death,” the lawsuit alleged.

Asked why it took so long for the government to act, Chris Kavanaugh, the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Virginia, said, “It takes time to substantiate allegations like this. The search warrant that was executed was so complex. ... Do I wish we could’ve gone in more quickly? Of course. Always. But you have to make sure it’s done right.”

Once Envigo reached its settlement with the Justice Department, the resolution of the case was suddenly on a fast track.

The breeding operation, the judge ruled, needed to be emptied of beagles within 60 days.

Caretaker Danielle McClammy plays with beagle pups at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter on Aug. 8.
(Bonnie Jo Mount/The Washington Post)

The public fascination with the Envigo beagles was instantaneous. Thousands of people across the country wanted them.

In Milwaukee, the Wisconsin Humane Society set off a frenzy when it announced that it would put a litter of Envigo puppies up for adoption on a Tuesday morning in early August.

Identical twins from Southern California were the first in line.

The 31-year-old sisters had flown to Milwaukee and shown up at the shelter at 3 a.m., carrying a new tent that they couldn't figure out how to set up.

"We have been stalking all the rescue groups," explained Christine Fan, who — like her twin Chrisdo — worked as a real estate attorney in Irvine, Calif., about 15 minutes from Disneyland. "We booked a one-way red-eye flight here."

Behind them was an older man reading a James Patterson novel beneath the shade of an umbrella and, nearby, a woman in a fuchsia T-shirt that read: "Sorry I'm late, my dog was sitting on me."

More dog people kept arriving.

Christine Fan, left, and her twin sister Chrisdo Fan hold their beagle puppies after adopting them on Aug. 9. (Joshua Lott/The Washington Post)

People wait in line for their chance to adopt beagle puppies at the Wisconsin Humane Society. (Joshua Lott/The Washington Post)

The four puppies up for adoption belonged to Juniper, who'd been liberated from Envigo on the same day as Nellie and Uno. Juniper and her pups had spent three weeks being fostered by a critical care nursing manager. Now the 2-month-olds were vaccinated, spayed, weaned and ready for new homes.

The puppy pursuers outside the Humane Society far outnumbered voters at a neighboring polling place for the Wisconsin primary. One man — who arrived at the Humane Society with an injured crow — appeared bewildered by all the people, asking if they were there for one of the gubernatorial candidates.

Just before 11 a.m., the Humane Society opened.

The twins, seated in blue lawn chairs, tapped on their laptops, logging into their Humane Society adoption profiles to try to claim a puppy. Christine accidentally clicked on the tab for cat adoption, and in the few seconds it took to correct her mistake, she was placed sixth in the virtual queue. Chrisdo couldn't get the page to load at all. When it finally did, she placed 25th. They closed their laptops and stepped into the building's lobby.

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Christine was nervous. Her last rescue beagle, Mooki, had recently died, and she was eager to adopt another. She wondered whether she would get lucky after coming from so far away.

Then she heard her name called.

She signed the paperwork and paid the \$499 adoption fee for Joy, the chunkiest of Juniper's puppies. But there was another surprise — a second litter of Envigo puppies was also going up for adoption that day. A counselor informed Christine that, if she wanted, she could adopt a second female from the other litter, meaning each twin could go home with a puppy.

The sisters looked at each other, delighted and relieved.

"That was worse than taking the California bar exam," Chrisdo declared.

A half-hour later, the twins were walking out the Humane Society's sliding front doors, [a puppy cradled against each of their chests](#).

They passed dozens of dejected would-be adopters. There were many other dogs that needed homes — some who had been at the shelter for weeks.

But they weren't Envigo puppies.



Lauren Kellogg retrieves Nellie from her crate at their condo in Northwest Washington on Aug. 1.
(Bonnie Jo Mount/The Washington Post)

Nellie hated recreational soccer.

She hated the chirp of the referee's whistle and the unpredictability of the running children.

But her new home — a second-floor condo in Northwest Washington — was located across the street from an elementary school with an athletic field.

On walks, Nellie had to endure the sound of the soccer games and the noise of the city's streets — trucks rattling, pop music blasting out car windows, drivers screeching to a stop.

All of it made Nellie so nervous that she struggled to pee outside. She preferred the comfort and safety of her crate, covered in soft blankets and tucked in a corner of Lauren and Trevor Kellogg's bedroom.

"Right now, we basically have to grab her and pull her out," Lauren said. "She'll physically shake. She just wants to go right back in."

As soon as she heard about the Envigo dogs, Lauren, 28, had emailed Homeward Trails, offering to adopt one of the most difficult cases.

She and Trevor, 30, already owned a 4-year-old rescue beagle named Beesly. In 2020, the pup had been saved from a Covance laboratory, where she'd been used in a six-month study for an experimental drug.

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Lauren had once worked as the head of corporate strategy at a pharmaceutical company that contracted with Covance for animal drug trials. Now at a different company, she was passionate about the issue of animal welfare and had even taken Beesly to Capitol Hill to lobby for bills. (She said Beesly — fearful of men, thanks to her days in male-dominated labs — was terrified by Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul.)

But Nellie was proving even more skittish than Beesly.

The couple only had a few more months left in their D.C. neighborhood. In September, they were moving to a house with a fenced backyard in the suburbs. Until then, Nellie would have to cope with being a city dog.

To help with the transition, Lauren hired a dog trainer named Sam Wolfman, who arrived at their condo on a hot summer morning, armed with string cheese.

She greeted Beesly first. It was good that the Kelloggs had her, Wolfman said, because she could teach Nellie how to be a dog. The trainer fed Beesly a chunk of cheese. Nellie watched from inside her crate.

"I know Nellie's going to be fine," Lauren said. "But I do feel pretty bad because some of the city stuff may not be helping."



Dog trainer Janice du Plessis holds Nefertiti on July 27. (Bonnie Jo Mount/The Washington Post)



Nami relaxes at Homeward Trails Animal Rescue on July 27. (Bonnie Jo Mount/The Washington Post)

“You’re doing everything right so far,” Wolfman reassured. “You’re really sensitive to her sensitivities, which is great. Some people get a fearful dog and they’re like, ‘I just don’t understand.’”

While Lauren and Trevor were prepared to put in the work, others were finding out that [adopting an Envigo beagle](#) was more difficult than they’d thought.

Nellie shares a rope toy with the Kellogg's other beagle, Beesly, who was rescued from a Covance laboratory in Indianapolis two years ago. (Video: Lauren Kellogg)

One dog, Nami, was returned to Homeward Trails because she had trouble interacting with her adoptive family’s basset hound and struggled to walk on a leash. That same month, another dog, Mounds, was returned to Kindness Ranch for obsessively humping his adopter’s Jack Russell terrier.

Even Uno, who’d been adopted by the Ramers after barking all the way back to Wyoming, cowered when he was approached by new people.

Lauren and Trevor Kellogg with their two rescue beagles, Nellie and Beesly, in September 2022.
(Rachel Kellogg)

Now Wolfman pointed to how Nellie licked her lips and pinned back her ears when she was anxious. The trainer told Lauren and Trevor to scatter treats outside Nellie's cage, encouraging her to explore beyond its door.

It seemed to work. As the summer passed, Nellie no longer cried when she had to step outside her cage. She and Beesly, who hadn't interacted much, started to share a rope toy, playing together for the first time. Nellie discovered how to jump onto the couch, then onto the bed.

The abuses Nellie had faced in her first two years of life were etched

in her core — and likely always would be.

But Nellie fell in love with Trevor, following him from room to room. She gobbled sliced hot dogs, rolled on her back on the bed, and stuck her nose into people's armpits. She was learning to trust that this life was hers for good.

She was learning to be brave.

A staff member pets a beagle at Homeward Trails Animal Rescue on July 21. (Ryan M. Kelly for The Washington Post)

The beagle wouldn't look Samantha Nelson in the eyes.

He huddled in the bottom of the rolling cart, his stomach pancaked to the bottom.

It was early September, and the final group of 300 beagles were

leaving Envigo. "I didn't even realize he was our last guy to load," Nelson, 30, said later.

Uno, the first dog to be rescued from Envigo, at Kindness Ranch Animal Sanctuary in Hartville, Wyo.
(John Ramer)

Fin, the last beagle to leave Envigo, at home with his foster family in Maine. (Courtesy of Alice Persons)

She scooped the beagle out of the cart and cradled him against her chest. The Humane Society's senior specialist of shelter outreach and policy engagement, Nelson had been orchestrating this rescue from behind a computer screen for two months, placing the dogs at more than 120 rescues across the country. Now, she gazed at the 6-year-old. His nose was white, freckled with brown.

Nelson whispered to him: "You're going to be okay. You're safe now." She placed him in the crate that would carry him to his new home near Portland, Maine.

The beagle's name, it was decided, would be Fin.

Story editing by Lynda Robinson, photo editing by Mark Miller, video editing by Amber Ferguson, copy editing by Jamie Zega, design by Michael Domine. Staff researcher Razzan Nakhlawi contributed to this report.

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