

# Saving man's best friend

*Beagle Paws finds homes for abandoned dogs*

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*The Compass*

During the past year Beagle Paws has found homes for over 150 lost, abandoned or otherwise abused beagles.

"They have been adopted in every province in Canada," says Beagle Paws founder Sheila Lewis of St. John's.

The fact that there is a need for such an organization says much about the mistreatment of the breed.

Lewis, originally from Clarenville, said she developed the Beagle Paws website after watching a CBC TV *Land and Sea* program by Pauline Thornhill.

"It brought my attention to the plight of beagles here in the province. As a beagle owner I was appalled at the way some beagles were being treated, ending up in shelters."

It appears many of the beagles are owned by rabbit hunters. However, Lewis emphasizes there are also many "responsible hunters out there and we don't want to tar them all with the same brush."

Lewis owned a beagle for 11 years before she founded the group.

"She was the family pet. I wasn't aware of rabbit hunting when I had her. She passed away the year before I started this organization. I now have two brothers, rescued from a pen in Spaniard's Bay."

The rabbit-hunting season in Newfoundland runs from the fall until the end of February.

"Last year (during the season) we weren't that well known, we were just starting out. This year we were overwhelmed, with almost 30 dogs in our care."

The organization receives quite a number of dogs that have been caught in fox snares, discovered by "responsible hunters."

"Of course there are instances where beagles will get lost. But a good hunter will spend days searching. We've had them calling distraught, they won't give up."

Along with finding homes for beagles Beagle Paws also tries to promote better ownership and responsibility.

"You see beagles suffering from lung worm, heartworm...all it takes is a pill once a month. These dogs are not getting the vet care they need, and then the owners wonder why they're sick."

### Much interest

Beagle Paws became a full-fledged organization in January 2003. There are about 14 executive members and 40 volunteers.



Photo submitted

**BLESSED BEAGLES** - Sheila Lewis, founder and president of Beagle Paws poses with Cody and Cooper at the Blessing of the Animals at the Anglican Cathedral, St. John's.

"Right now we are based in Newfoundland, but we have a representative in Vancouver and we hope to have more representatives in different provinces."

The dogs are farmed out to foster homes from one to four weeks until adoptions can be arranged. The group has foster homes in Port de Grave and Bay Roberts and adoptive families go through a screening.

"Right now I know of probably 10 to 15 beagles in shelters waiting to come to us."

### Dispelling the myths

Another aim of the organization is to dispel the many myths about the breed, particularly for those who are interested in adoption.

One such myth, Lewis says, is that if a dog is spayed or neutered, "they feel it won't hunt as well."

There is, however, no physical or behavioural evidence that shows spayed/neutered beagles are less effective hunters.

Another misconception is that a beagle must

be hungry in order to hunt and should be fed only every other day.

The fact is all dogs must receive a well-balanced diet of high quality food every day, particularly if they are involved in regular outdoor activity.

Contrary to popular belief, beagles should not be kept in outdoor enclosure or pens. They need plenty of exercise and "it is inhumane to keep a dog confined to a small enclosure for long periods of time".

There are some hunters who think beagles can withstand the cold winter months with minimal shelter. However the beagle's coat is smooth or shorthaired and not meant to protect against harsh weather conditions.

Beagles are not dirty and don't have a distinctive smell, Lewis says.

"If they're left outside, of course, they'll smell, so would you or I," she adds. "A beagle is no different than any other dog in the house. Any dog that does not receive the proper bathing and grooming will emit an unpleasant smell."

The Beagle Paws president also said quite often people looking to adopt say they've heard the dogs are a noisy breed.

"But they aren't any noisier than any other dog. They bark when they want to get your attention."

### Sad stories

Lewis says her organization has seen some pretty sad cases of neglect and abuse.

"We recently rescued a dog that had a collar grown into its skin. It looks like the owner put the collar on when the dog was a puppy. We found the dog in the Ruby Line area; he was full of feces."

Fortunately that dog has since been adopted. "He's doing great now, but he can't wear a collar."

Another beagle, found by someone in Victoria, is almost blind.

"He was about 10 months old and born with abnormal eyes. He has very limited sight, but we're working with him, doing some training, looking at surgery options."

Unfortunately though, the dog may never gain the ability to see.

"He never had any vet care until we got him."

### Happy stories

Beagle Paws spends about \$600 a week on vet care, with money obtained through fundraising. "We do have discounts at some of the vet's," Lewis said.

Fifteen of the dogs have found homes in British Columbia.

"They're actually having a Newfoundland Beagle reunion July 10, the same day we're having a reunion in St. John's. People are coming from all across the province."

The reunion offers an opportunity for adoptive families to get together and the chance for separated siblings to reacquaint.

"There have been instances where we've gotten a mom and a litter and have placed them for adoption," Lewis explained.

Beagle Paws was at the T.C. Square in Carbonear Saturday to promote awareness.

"We wanted to see if there's interest in helping out the group," Lewis said last Wednesday. "We've had a lot of dogs come in from the Conception Bay area."

Anyone who does have an interest should check out Beagle Paws website: [www.beaglepaws.com](http://www.beaglepaws.com).

The group is also available for educational sessions for schools and clubs.