



Pepper's Story...

My name is Kara Adkins. I have a husband of 12 years, mom of two great kids, six dogs, and am an 8th grade science teacher at Dawkins Middle School in Spartanburg District 6. I reside in Moore, SC.

One evening in late April 2014, I received a text from a friend with this picture of a starving dog and her pups. "Could I help?" the text asked. That night I drove to Cross Anchor to rescue this starving dog and her starving puppies. The night we brought them home, I was worried mom and puppies would not survive. At the vet the next afternoon, I was informed that with some nutritional intervention and deworming, the puppies would be fine. Mama dog, on the other hand, had many obstacles to overcome. She was diagnosed with several infections, intestinal parasites, severe malnutrition, and worst of all heartworm. Her heartworm bloodwork showed a severe case.

Pepper and her litter of eight puppies were lucky because of my intervention. It was costly. Thankfully, a northern rescue group who rehomed Pepper's puppies, paid for the pups' spaying/neutering. Costs for initial medical care and follow up for Pepper's heartworm treatment have been in the thousands of dollars.

Dogs like Pepper end up the way they do in part because pet owners often just do not consider taking their dog to a traditional vet practice a priority. Whether it be the expense, or convenience they opt to do nothing. In Pepper's case, it was severe neglect and her owner admitted he lacked the resources to care for her and the puppies. Whatever the reason, the facts remain that dogs like Pepper contract heartworms, suffer, and die without intervention. Pepper's estimated age was just over a year old. She had suffered a hard life of having multiple litters, starvation, and heartworm at a very young age.

Because dogs like Pepper need their owners to provide them heartworm medication, I don't think any legislation that limits affordability and accessibility is good legislation. Please don't put any more barriers between dogs like Pepper and affordable, accessible preventative medicine by making it impossible for mobile vets to serve clients. Spay neuter clinics offer pet owners who cannot afford the services of a private vet practice, the opportunity to fix their pets and get them up to date on vaccines/medications. These pet owners were not going to other vets, so I can't see how private vets can make the case business is being taken away. When shelters are empty of unwanted animals suffering many illnesses including heartworm, then we can revisit the issue. Until then, please don't take away many animals only lifesaving services.

I have rescued, fostered, and rehomed ~60 dogs, kittens, and puppies and helped countless others over the last 10 years. Many of these dogs had heartworm. I have spent 30,000 plus dollars of my own money over the years to help stray animals. I also at times depend on the services of low cost spaying and neutering to do the right thing by these animals.