

Spanish greyhound 'Mariposa' finds a loving home in Penfield

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Apr. 03

democratandchronicle.com



Rachel Guthrie's new dog Mariposa, a six-month-old galgo, a breed of Spanish greyhound, in her Penfield home on Monday.

For more information on galgos and how to help them, go to sighthoundunderground.com.

Rochester is also home to an active greyhound rescue organization.

For more information on that group, go to www.greyhoundadopt.org.

In her birth country of Spain, 6-month-old greyhound puppy Mariposa could have been shot, thrown down a well or hanged from a tree by now.

Instead, she's tearing around her new Penfield home, gnawing on anything that fits in her mouth and exasperating her canine colleagues, Nerina and Bailey.

Mariposa is a galgo, or Spanish greyhound, one of only several hundred in the country. Rachel Guthrie and Kyle Kuba, of Penfield, recently adopted her through a chain of international rescue agencies with the goal of saving the dogs from persecution in Spain.

Galgos are sighthounds that can hit 45 miles per hour in bursts and spot prey a mile away. Like other sighthounds, they're prized as hunting dogs, but in Spain only young males are used in the fields.

Female puppies and older dogs are seen as expendable and are often killed in shocking ways, including being hanged from trees, according to Michael Owens, director of The Sighthound Underground, a rescue group.

"The things that happen to them are fairly horrific, especially by U.S. standards," Owens said. "If you look at bullfighting, (Spain) just has a very different view of humane treatment of animals from the rest of the world."

There are rescue groups in Spain that take the dogs from cooperative hunters — that is how Mariposa and her sister and parents were saved. A second group flew them to Washington, D.C., where Sighthound Underground held them in foster care until permanent homes could be found.

It's a complicated and expensive process, and only a handful of lucky galgos make it to the United States every year; Mariposa may be the only one in the Rochester area.

Guthrie and Kuba already have a 7-year-old greyhound and said they love the dogs' affectionate demeanor. They applied to adopt Mariposa (Spanish for 'butterfly') and took her home in early March.

"She gets a lot of attention. People can't quite place what she is," Guthrie said. "At the vet, everyone came to see her. Her breed wasn't in the system."

Despite their prodigious speed, greyhounds like Mariposa are not high-energy. She spends most of her free time lying on the couch or testing the patience of the two older dogs in the house.

Chew marks on furniture and pee spots on the carpet attest she's still very much a puppy. She'll grow to about 50 pounds and never fear the brutal death she might have faced in Spain.

Guthrie grew up in a cat household but has become a full-fledged sighthound lover.

"I'm a sucker for the little pinhead," Guthrie said. "They look like they're so intelligent and sophisticated and soulful, but they're really just goofy dogs."