

## For the love of the furry, feathered kind.

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I knew some day it would come to this. As long as I can remember, my family has had pets... little four-legged family members intimately attached to our lives.

Clyde- the cat that just kept coming back. Sabina- the cat who wanted a piece of all the activities in the driveway whether you be walking or fixing a car and who always smelled of pine needles. Sandi- who would look up expectantly at you if you stopped walking with her. Sugarfoot, Tiffany, Rupert... And dear, dear Puppi, heart of gold, angel among dogs, sleep with me when dad was away, forever waiting for the bus to bring her kids home. Shhhhhh... we only speak of her in hushed, reverent tones.

Before I get to the point, I need you all to understand the depth of the problem here. With the recent cold snap that we've had, our rooster has developed frostbite- that's right folks. Frostbite on his waddle. Get your mind out of the gutter! It's not that dirty. So, we set up a space heater and a 5 gallon bucket of water in the chicken coop to run when the generator runs. Uh-huh. Heat. For the chickens. In the coop. To no avail though, rooster's waddle remained black around the edges with a couple white spots. So Dan started researching online and found a woman who MASSAGED vasoline into the rooster's waddle. What really improved the frostbite was the amount of time she massaged the waddle. Visions of me sitting on a bale of hay in the coop with rooster on lap tirelessly massaging his waddle popped into my head. Great. My life has clearly degraded. My friends totally will not understand this. They don't get the off-grid thing. They will NOT understand THIS. For now, I have decided to pass on the massaging. Dan however, understanding and compassionate man that he is (love you hun!), was determined and did try. Dan also tossed out the idea of moving the chickens into the basement. Again, great. It's not enough that we have the nicest chicken coop in the state of NH, now we have to move them inside. We're going to see how it goes for now. Hopefully, rooster will heal or at least not worsen before the spring. Days are counting before I do degrade into massaging the waddles. Pray for me!

And now on my own, two by two, we're working our way up to a veritable Noah's Ark of the animal kingdom. 2 Cockatiels, 2 cats, 4 chickens, and 2 dogs... that's right, 2 dogs. Daisy and on Saturday, my very understanding mother (Love you mom!) will be picking up our newest addition to the Bergamini family from a truck which will leave from Kentucky on it's own mission of salvation for animals and arrive in Binghamton. I will meet him on Sunday.

Copper is a black lab cross aussie, who was in desperate need of a home. He is 18 months old- 2 of which had been spent in the shelter. He had apparently been hit by a car resulting in a broken hip or leg and a distinct lack of tail. He no longer limps (thank goodness), but I am amused by the idea that he's going to have "phantom wagging". Dan and I giggle over this. We can't wait to meet him. We are all a band of misfits (another rant forthcoming on friendship- that's right buckle your bootstraps peeps- a true rant. It would seem feathered and furred beings are the only ones I can truly rely on.)

The shelter raved about how friendly and sweet he is. He is clearly submissive (he cowered to a cat who hissed at him when they "cat tested" him.) I am so excited to be adopting such a needy, deserving soul. I know that he's "damaged goods" and any normal person would take one of the cute puppies, but I ask you, "who else is going to love him as we will?" Where else will he get this paradise of running and sniffing in the woods? Who will make a better sister than a Daisy Mae who loves to play and spin with other dogs? He was meant to be with us.