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Longest Muncie Animal Care resident patiently waiting for fur-ever home

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(Photo: Jordan Kartholl / Star Press)

MUNCIE, Ind. — Thunder, a 4-year-old pit bull mix at Muncie Animal Care and Services, is tired of one-night stands. For 291 days, he's sat in his kennel waiting for someone to swipe right.

"He's always very popular. The Ball State kids want to come in and take him out. So, we know he does well; he just doesn't share people very well. He's stingy, is what it is," said office manager Ashley Honeycutt.

Though he's a popular option for doggy dates, Thunder always ends up back in A30, his 10-by-4-foot kennel at the shelter.

Because he's been there so long, Thunder has a reduced adoption fee of \$5 (it usually costs \$100 to adopt a dog from the shelter). Along with the reduced adoption fee, those interested in adopting him need to fill out an adoption application.

An unknown past

When Thunder first came to the shelter Sept. 4, 2017, he weighed around 35 pounds, had an ear infection, poor fur quality and looked like he had been outside for a while.

He was found by animal control officer Natalie Beach in Selma, around Hills and Dales Drive moments before a large thunderstorm.

Beach said she enticed Thunder with treats and put him in the back of her truck. On her way back to the shelter, there was a "torrential downpour of rain and thunder and lightning."

Though he boasts a thunderous bark, his name comes from that night when Beach rescued him.

Staff members, including Beach, think his stay in the shelter is the best his life has ever been. He's content there, but he's ready to find his home.



Shelter worker Natalie Beach sits with Thunder outside of the Muncie Animal Care and Services facility Friday afternoon. (Photo: Jordan Kartholl / Star Press)

Neurological issues

The caramel pit bull is a “special boy,” said Phil Peckinpaugh, director of the shelter. Thunder walks with a clumsy gait, has a head tilt and low vision.

Although he might run into walls or people sometimes, it’s not any more work to care for Thunder than any other dog, so he shouldn’t incur additional costs, Peckinpaugh said.

Despite his vision problems, he’s still able to get around. When The Star Press took Thunder on a doggy date, he walked well on a leash.

Though timid at first, he jumped into a car without any issues and sat still. For the most part, Thunder listens well, although there were a few times when he needed an extra nudge.

In addition to his neurological issues, Thunder has very few teeth. Staff members are unsure of what happened, but they know his teeth didn’t rot out. Although he’s missing quite a few, he’s still able to eat hard foods and treats.

Single-dog home

Usually, Thunder doesn’t bark unless he’s barked at. He’s not dog aggressive, but he is cat aggressive and would not be a good fit in a home with small children.

“We’ve tested him and he just, he hasn’t fought anybody, but he didn’t show that he was interested in being with (another dog),” Beach said. “He’s probably never been around other dogs and ... we never want to risk it. We don’t want him to get attacked or attack another dog.”

Although Thunder hasn’t attacked or bitten anyone or any animals at the shelter, Beach said it would be best if his forever home doesn’t have small children, as he is protective of toys — especially if they’re squeak toys.

Because he’s still young, Beach said there’s a possibility that a trainer could help Thunder adjust to other dogs.

[Fullscreen](#)

Dozens of dogs in need of adoption at the Muncie shelter



Thunder has resided at the Muncie Animal Care and Services facility for nearly 300 days. (Photo: Jordan Kartholl / Star Press)

Returning to the shelter

During his stay at the shelter, Thunder has been adopted twice: once in January during a promotional adoption event and a few weeks later in February. Both times he was returned.

His first potential owner said he wasn't eating and kept pacing in circles, though Peckinpaugh said Thunder doesn't have anxiety.

"He doesn't display any anxiety at all. He seems to be perfectly content. We've seen no separation issues at all," Peckinpaugh said. "Now, I will tell you that animals are so much different when they're in their homes. So, that's not to say that he won't go home and destroy your couch when you're gone. I mean, that's just a risk of adoption with any dog."

Thunder is one of the 1,480 animals the shelter has rescued this year.

Unknown future

Day after day, Thunder goes through the same routine. He's let out in the morning around 7 a.m. by Dana Salkoski, the shelter's rescue coordinator. By 7:30 a.m. he's taken back to his kennel.

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He's antsy. He often paces in his kennel, circling the front of the fence, across his pale green cot, then back again. He does it a few times before he either sits or stretches across the cool tile leaving his hind legs behind him.

Since the first week he was placed in his kennel, Salkoski has tried marketing Thunder to other rescues, hoping to find him a home — even if it's in a different state.

In July, Thunder, also affectionally called "Thundercat" by the staff, will be featured in Best Friends Animal Society's newsletter, which Salkoski is hoping will garner interest in Thunder, as the society helps two of the largest no-kill shelters in Utah.

"I don't get it because we've had dogs that are special needs. We've had dogs that are only dogs. I don't get why he gets passed over all the time," she said.

In addition to reaching out to other rescues and sharing his photo on Facebook, control officer Beach created a Twitter for Thunder (@adoptthunder) to help garner interest in the dog. In the past, Twitter accounts for longtime residents have been successful.

“She (Darla) was adopted because the man up in Indy saw that and he wanted to come see her. She’s adopted and she’s in a happy home now,” Beach said.

Beach said she will continue to manage Twitter accounts for animals who’ve been in the shelter for a while or who the staff thinks will have a hard time getting adopted, including Thunder.

Mary Freda is an intern at the Star Press. Follow her on Twitter @Mary_Freda1, and email her story ideas: mfreda@muncie.gannett.com.

Get to know Thunder

Name: Thunder (occasional nickname of “Thundercat”)

How old is Thunder?: Around 4 years old.

Does he have allergies?: No, none that the shelter is aware of.

Does he require special food?: No, but he eats grain-free dog food at the shelter.

Does he do well with strangers?: Yes; there have been no reports of a bad interaction with a stranger.

Is Thunder housebroken?: Yes, he tries not to use his kennel as a bathroom.

Is he scared of loud noises?: Yes, the staff believes Thunder might be scared of loud noises.

Does Thunder chew?: To the shelter staff’s knowledge, no.

Does Thunder like to cuddle?: Yes.

Does he do well in the bath?: Yes, staff members say he stands very still. He also does well with getting his nails cut. However, it would be in the best interest of his future owners for Thunder to go to a private groomer because of his disinterest in other dogs.

Was Thunder abused?: The staff is unsure, but they said he’s never shied away from them.

What are Thunder’s favorite treats/toys?: Thunder enjoys a good cheeseburger and squeak toy — not at the same time.

How much is Thunder?: Thunder is \$5 to adopt. Those interested will need to fill out an application to adopt him.

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