LOCATION: Las Vegas, Nevada

ANIMALS ASSISTED: Special-needs desert tortoises

ONE HAS A DEFORMED SHELL. Another had been kept in a closet by a previous owner. Several are missing limbs.

For years, these once-neglected tortoises have found sanctuary at the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center on the outskirts of Las Vegas. But with the facility scheduled to close this year because of federal budget cuts, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has asked The HSUS for help rehoming the special-needs animals.

In June, 16 will be transported to The Kerulos Center in Oregon, where an HSUS-administered grant is helping the facility build its first of several geodesic domes to house the incoming residents. Each tortoise will have his own burrow, plus native cacti, wildflowers and even roses to eat and a barn for winter hibernation. A trust will fund their lifetime care. “Our primary goal is to rescue and provide sanctuary for these individuals,” says Kerulos director Gay Bradshaw. “But we’ll also be using this as an opportunity to promote education as to who reptiles really are.”

A desert tortoise is ready to crawl into the southern Nevada desert, part of a massive relocation project for the threatened animals.