

Our View: Still too many animals at shelter are euthanized

Sun-News report

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The good news is, after a front-page story Thursday that featured a photo of a mother Lab and her four puppies who were among 56 dogs targeted for euthanasia to clear the way for 12 pit bulls being held in a pending dog fighting case, things began to happen.

First, the animal shelter was flooded with calls and drop-ins of those offering to adopt the condemned canines. Then, the county announced it had received enough donations to hold the pit bulls at an alternate location, meaning the other dogs would be able to keep their spots at the shelter.

The bad news is, there are hundreds of animals brought to the shelter each week that don't get their picture on the front page of the newspaper. They are just as lovable and just as deserving of a good home, but most will never find one.

Shelter officials tell us they take in, on average, about 1,400 animals a month. Of those, only about 20 percent of the cats and kittens find homes, and fewer than half the dogs and puppies. The rest are put to death.

"A story in today's Las Cruces Sun-News about the ripple effect of moving those 12 pit bulls to the shelter has opened a lot of eyes in this community to a tragic problem," Sheriff Todd Garrison said. "The Do-a Ana County Sheriff's Department will do what we can, but this will take action by the entire community if we're ever to stop the high numbers of euthanizations at our animal shelter."

There are two ways to reduce the number of animals killed each week at the shelter - increase spay and neuter services and adoptions. Sadly, the city has been less than helpful in both areas. It has banned what had been a popular adoption program each week at the downtown farmer's market, and has reduced funding for spay and neuter services. Both of those decisions will result in more animals being put to death.

But the hard truth is, this isn't a government problem. Far too many in this community still view dogs and cats as personal property, and not as creatures of God to be loved and cared for. It is that attitude that must change before we will see a real reduction in our unacceptable euthanasia rates.