

On the Positive Side: Mobile spay/neuter unit that is mostly idle should be used

by Frank Bryce

December 25, 2015

If you read the last On the Positive Side in which the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico's 2016 resolutions were identified, you may have seen how those efforts are particularly related to and dependent on one aspect. One could describe that aspect as a leg of the stool, the strongest link in the chain or the key to the puzzle.

No one can argue that spaying and neutering of our pets to prevent unwanted pet litters, provide for public safety, reduce county and city animal control operation costs and substantially curtail euthanasia of healthy and treatable animals at our government animal shelter does not take center stage. Yet, our arguably most valuable and expensive locally available resource sits virtually idle, underutilized and caught in bureaucratic quagmire of turf, authority and resistance.

The resource in question is a mobile veterinary surgical vehicle, uniquely designed for high volume, low-cost spay and neuter services, purchased several years ago for the Doña Ana County Sheriff's Department. At the time, the 2-year old unit was purchased with capital outlay funds of about \$140,000 at a savings of nearly \$50,000. With the cooperation of volunteers and an animal welfare organization, the unit was initially used extensively for the purpose for which it was designed. Unfortunately, this use was allowed to dissipate to the point that the unit has for some years been modestly used for hoarding cases, a very minimal number of necropsy cases and as a mobile office for the once monthly county codes and animal control ACES public awareness and compliance program. Mostly, it sits idle.

For several years now, interested and committed animal welfare groups have negotiated with the county governing departments to develop a program re-instituting the use of the mobile van for underserved areas of Doña Ana County.

The unit could also serve as an additional surgical facility at the Animal Service Center of Mesilla Valley when not used for off-site events. Under almost any circumstances, the unit could and should still be utilized for county emergencies and disaster response.

Interested animal welfare groups are planning a targeted media campaign to stress the purpose of this vehicle's acquisition, original and current use, community support and how new regularly conducted spay and neuter clinics would save thousands of pet lives and literally millions of dollars spent for shelter and animal control department operations.

To learn more about this effort and how you can get involved, please check out upcoming events and programs at www.hssnm.org and www.zeroin7.org. You are urged to attend events and support the animal welfare organizations of your choice to reach their important shared goals.

Frank Bryce is president of HSSNM. Interested guest authors can contact HSSNM at 575-5238020.