

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

On the Positive Side: 2010 seminar focused on enforcement of animal abuse laws

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While animal welfare advocates share enjoyment and concern for our four-footed friends, they know that their positive feelings depend for implementation on informed strategies. This is the goal of humane education.

Sadly, there are some situations where love and general awareness are not enough. Extremes demand the force of law and the process of its application through the courts to stop the abuse. Only after abuse is stopped can wise love rehabilitate.

With this need in mind, the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico in March of 2010 sponsored a two-day seminar entitled "Investigate and Win Animal Abuse Cases." The nationally known presenter was Catherine Wolfe, whose B.S. degree in fisheries and wildlife biology and law degree from the Detroit School of Law (1984) have enhanced her lifelong passion for animals, their welfare and especially their protection from abuse. Her seminal work, "Get the Edge in Fighting Animal Cruelty Cases," is used both as text in her seminars and handbook for animal control long after her departure, in many jurisdictions around the country.

The seminar was designed primarily for Animal Control officers here in Las Cruces. County officers also attended and were joined by other officials and interested citizens. Seminar topics included "Evidence Collection under Smart Investigation," "Intelligent Selection of the Most Powerful Evidence," "Writing Winning Reports" and "Writing Bulletproof Search Warrants."

Effective techniques for the arrangement of evidence for presentation and interviewing witnesses were woven into the presentations. Relevant, informative and interesting case studies reviewed and brought home the theories and precepts. Animal control officers took notes, and HSSNM presented them with copies of Ms. Wolfe's text.

Civilians listened hard, picking up pointers on knowing control, and the community at large; and that pictures trump eye-witness assertions. Animal control is a hard profession. Professionals must both earn and be treated with community respect, and cooperation. Adequate funding is essential.

One year later, has this seminar made a difference? Has animal abuse decreased? Call the HSSNM pet helpline - 523-8020 - and share your thoughts. We learn from each other.

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