

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

How you can help if you find a lost pet

By Frank Bryce

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Several years ago, the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico wrote an article on how to help a stray animal that shows up unexpectedly get back home safely and swiftly. In spite of the current effort by county and city animal control officers to return animals immediately after they've been identified with tags or microchips, but before taking a trip to the shelter, many end up in the yard of a good Samaritan. Although there has been such a flurry of such incidents recently with often-successful results, it seems appropriate to share that information again with a broad audience to keep the positive conclusions going.

It seems that many of us are at a loss as to how to handle the unexpected arrival of a loving furball that needs our help to get back home. This can be the beginning of a slippery slope for so many companions that can lead to unnecessary situations with serious consequences for a loving companion without some help from you. What would you want your neighbor to do if it was your family companion?

Here is where pet responsibility expands from the pet owner to the neighbor or compassionate bystander who is willing to get involved. Of course, if the animal is possibly injured or poses a threat to others or itself, contacting Central Dispatch at 575-526-0795 is the immediate step to take to protect people, other pets and the animal. A county or city animal control unit can be dispatched for help.

If it seems healthy and friendly and a secure safe holding area is available, you can check the companion for tags and identifying collar which may be all that is required to send this wayward waif back home. If no collar or tags are found, a most important step is to call and file a "found pet" report with the Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley at 575-382-0018 to see if a "lost pet" report matches the situation.

A call to the HSSNM's Pet Helpline at 575-523-8020 or Action Programs for Animals at 575-644-0505 with a similar report can get the animal on their websites. A number of animal advocate organizations, veterinary clinics and the animal shelter can help scan the animal for a microchip to reunite furballs with family. A leashed walk around your neighborhood (good exercise for all of us) and knocking on a few doors along with posting some fliers may help find the family home frantically searching already for your new friend.

The city and county ordinances require notification of the possession of a rescued animal after 24 hours to city animal control at 575-528-4100 or county animal control at 575-647-7715 but you, with appropriate actions, by retaining possession of the animal for a day or longer, reduce the number of animals overflowing at our shelter, reduce stress for the stray and virtually eliminate disease exposure at the shelter. We all share in humane response to animals in need of help.

On Saturday, Sept. 27, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., HSSNM will provide microchipping of cats and dogs for \$7 at a special event hosted by Covergys on Del Rey Blvd. If you haven't microchipped your companion, please join us to take advantage of the low-cost event.

Frank Bryce is President of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico. Interested authors for "On The Positive Side" can contact HSSNM at 575-523-8020.