

**On the Positive Side: Lost and Found Department, Please  
by Frank Bryce  
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The Humane Society of Southern New Mexico gets calls on a frequent basis from people who have either lost their cat or dog or found one. All of them are making a sincere effort to get this bundle of love back to its home. Some know who we are, some think we are the shelter and some think we are the animal control department contact. Of course we begin immediately to post the information on our web site and send it out through the animal advocacy network shared by many organizations and individuals.

What appears to be a little known facet for finding lost cats and dogs a way back home is the "Lost Animal" or "Found Animal" report service available and provided by the Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley (ASCMV). By contacting the ASCMV (832-0018), people who have either found a lost animal or have indeed lost their companion animal can immediately register the animal in one or the other of these reporting files. This is about the first thing we ask people to do and are pleased to say this reporting system has very often led to a quick return of animals to their loving homes.

By the owners and finders taking the extra step to immediately notify the ASCMV shelter, many companion animals need not go to the shelter at all before reuniting with their families. The willingness of the finders to "foster" friendly, apparently uninjured and healthy found animals for even a day or two reduces the crowded conditions at the shelter, reduces the chances of exposure to disease more likely at the shelter, and saves both time and money for everyone. This is a great service if taken advantage of and supported by the community.

While reports can be given over the phone, since the system is not yet computer automated, people seeking to use the system are instructed to physically come to the shelter and review the reports in their respective binders. There are three binders-found cat, found dog, and a combination binder for lost cats and dogs. Sadly, there are two clipboards for deceased animals brought to the shelter. Having a concern for privacy act requirements, the shelter staff does not release contact information over the phone but if the information has been provided in the binders it becomes public information open to anyone reviewing the binders and they should be able to do that for callers. Currently, the ASCMV policy is that the reporting persons for lost or found reports are responsible for physically reviewing the binders themselves.

Regardless of the procedure involved currently, this is another positive opportunity for the community to work together with animal control, the shelter and each other to benefit our companion animal family members. Please use this program whenever possible.

Frank Bryce is President of the Humane Society of Southern new Mexico. Interested guest authors can contact the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico at 575-523-8020.