

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

Spay and neuter van to snap into action around the community

By Michelle Corella For the Sun-News

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Recently, the Spay and Neuter Action Program entered into a cooperative agreement with Doña Ana County to begin utilizing a mobile van that was purchased in 2007. Although the van was intended primarily for use as an emergency vehicle, such as the 2006 floods that swamped the village of Hatch, it also can be configured to function as a mobile adoption or spay/neuter center.

The county's current population is estimated at nearly 200,000 residents. Based on this figure, it is estimated that 300-350 spays or neuters of dogs and cats must take place monthly, on a consistent basis, in order to begin reducing the 1000 plus animals that are impounded at the Mesilla Valley Animal Services Center each month. The majority of these animals are euthanized due to the lack of homes available for them. It is a very sad statistic for Doña Ana County.

With the participation of several local vets, SNAP is able to facilitate more than 100 spays or neuters per month, but the mobile van adds a whole new dimension to the picture. It will operate primarily in low-income, outlying areas of the county, where residents do not have easy access to veterinary resources. Initially, the van will operate at least two weekends (Friday through Sunday) per month with a capacity of up to 30 animals per day. The plan is to spay or neuter approximately 200 animals per month via the mobile van, while continuing to facilitate the 100 plus surgeries currently being performed by local participating vets. This combination of surgical resources will provide the 300 spays or neuters needed to start positively affecting the shelter intake numbers.

The van is broken up into two sections: a kennel and prep area, and a surgical suite, complete with all of the accouterments normally found in any veterinarian's operating theater. The veterinarians and technicians on board the van are accustomed to working in a "mobile environment", which is more confined than a non-mobile office. Also, due to the high number of animals that are accommodated on the van each day, speed and efficiency is the order of the day. In addition to spaying and neutering the animals, a rabies vaccination also is given if the dog or cat is old enough and hasn't already been vaccinated.

The van will be at the Delores Wright Community Center in Chaparral from Dec. 5 through 7 and Dec. 12 through 14. Folks who are interested in having their companion animals spayed or neutered on the van should call the SNAP office at (575) 524-9265 or go by the office at 365 Avenida de Mesilla in Las Cruces, open Monday-Saturday from 11 a.m. 2 p.m. County residents who receive any type of assistance such as SSI or Medicaid, full-time college students, part-time students who receive financial assistance, or persons whose income falls within the HUD federal guidelines qualify for the SNAP program, and can have their cats spayed or neutered for \$15, or dogs altered for \$25 each.

The van is scheduled to be in Hatch in January. Those dates are forthcoming and will be disseminated as soon as everything is confirmed. For more information about SNAP, visit their Web site at www.snapnewmexico.org.

Michelle Corella is director of FCamp, the unofficial New Mexico State University organization that helps control feral cats on campus via the Trap-Neuter-Release model. The group's Web site is www.nmsu.edu/~fcamp