

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

Animal board set to meet in Albuquerque

By Frank Bryce For the Sun-News

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For some time, this feature's authors have extolled the positive actions taken to address animal welfare issues throughout Doña Ana County.

These included direction and emphasis by individuals, organizations and government leaders and terrific cooperative combinations of programs and events by all of these. While much has yet to be done, much has been achieved thanks to these tremendous efforts. Something seldom mentioned is that there are many concerned individuals, organizations and government leaders working across the state to provide humane animal care and treatment on a broad front. A far-reaching example is the New Mexico Animal Sheltering Services Act.

To provide assistance and oversight to unregulated city and county operated and contracted animal shelters, the Animal Sheltering Services Act was first introduced in the New Mexico Legislature in 2004. It took three subsequent legislative attempts with support from Gov. Bill Richardson and Sen. Mary Jane Garcia before it was passed in 2007. Richardson signed the act on March 29, 2007, and it took effect June 15, 2007. The act addresses the need for regulated animal sheltering services and sets standards for humane euthanasia.

To accomplish its mission, the act established the Animal Sheltering Services Board of nine members with a deep understanding of the issues facing us statewide and even deeper commitment to resolving these issues. Appointed by the governor, these dedicated individuals are identifying standards for shelter operations, will provide for training and licensing of euthanasia providers by certified instructors, and initiate disciplinary action. The board will adopt methods and procedures for emergency field euthanasia, and develop standards, curricula, continuing education requirements, and fees for licensure and certification of euthanasia providers. The board is also charged with assisting with development of spay and neuter plans and community outreach with animal shelters.

After some months of exhausting effort and in a notable leap forward, on May 6, the Animal Sheltering Services Board will convene a public hearing with respect to the adoption of regulations concerning general provisions, licensure and certification, duties of licensees and certificate holders, complaints enforcement and disciplinary action, and fees. These are known formally as Title 16, Chapter 24, parts one through five. The hearing will begin at 9 a.m. and be conducted at the Gaming Control Board Offices, 4900 Alameda Blvd. NE, in Albuquerque. The regulations for adoption can be reviewed at www.rld.state.nm.us/Animal_Shelting/ruleslaw.html, by sending a request to the board at P.O. Box 2510, Santa Fe, N.M. 87504, or by calling (505) 476-4795.

Public attendance and comment is invited and encouraged. Fifteen copies of comments for distribution to the board and staff must be provided no later than April 17, 5 p.m. to the Animal Sheltering Services Board, P.O. Box 25101, Santa Fe, N.M. 87504 by persons wishing to present comments.

The efforts and results of the New Mexico legislature, the governor and this board can only be described as "On the Positive Side."

Frank Bryce is vice president of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico and a member of the Rules Committee of the Animal Sheltering Services Board.