

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

On the Positive Side: Lobbying for Las Cruces cats

By Dr. Judy Long / For the Sun-News

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In my column on the cats of Jerusalem (June 12) I pointed out that there is a substantial spectrum separating “strays” from “pets.” Perhaps only the luckiest animals get to be pets, with forever homes and the best of care. Other animals get help in varying degrees, from a variety of sources.

From time to time in this column I have referred, half tongue in cheek, to the “Las Cruces Cat Lobby.” That is how I think of Las Cruces’ cat underground, individuals who rescue cats, care for them and place them in good homes. The cat underground is both a communication network and a chain of helping hands. It is an outpost in the war against pet overpopulation and just plain callousness that, together, kill thousands of cats in Las Cruces every year.

A major node in that network is Enchanted Gardens. Among the enchantments of this beautiful garden store are cats that are ready for adoption.

In a recent week, a mother cat and kittens were captured by friendlies. The adult cat was spayed - no more “mother cat” - and the kittens were adopted. A young adult, handsomely marked in orange marmalade, can also be viewed on the grounds. A beautiful princess can be seen in person at Enchanted Gardens. She is a dainty, longhaired white cat with lovely manners and a wistful expression. She inhabits a tiny, sunny boudoir off the main floor of the store. She would probably like to be the only cat in a household.

As many readers know, cats are connoisseurs of comfort. So I always feel good when I see a business that is watched over by a dignified, comfortable and congenial cat. The cats at Enchanted Gardens have additional, enviable attributes. They are protected by the necessary shots, they have been tested for feline leukemia, and they are spayed or neutered. And they are available for adoption.

When these cats are adopted out, their patron saint does not recover the substantial amount of money she has expended to make them safe and healthy. However, the prospective adopter has work to do, too. He or she must fill out an extensive questionnaire as an indication that she/he is qualified to take the responsibility. The contract between Enchanted Gardens and the adopter includes the possibility of a home visit, a promise not to sell or give the cat to any other person, guarantee of spay or neuter, and a promise not to subject the cat to de-clawing (there are preferable procedures).

An adopter who cannot live up to these agreements must return the cat to Enchanted Gardens.

Before she releases them to their forever homes, the owner asks the prospective adopters a number of questions about their pet history and current pets, the composition of the household, whether the intended habitat is indoors or out. She asks about their housing, who’s their veterinarian, and whether the residence has restrictions on animals. Is the landlord aware of the plan to adopt the cat?

This is more than a questionnaire, it’s a lesson. These are the questions that everyone who is thinking of adopting a cat should ask themselves. The cats of Enchanted Gardens are not intended to be throwaways or trade-ins. The awareness and commitment of the prospective adopter is their insurance policy.

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