

On the Positive Side

Cooperative spay, neuter picks up momentum

by FRANK BRYCE

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There appears to be some movement toward cooperative efforts between animal welfare organizations and the Animal Service of Mesilla Valley to provide additional spay and neuter opportunities. This is to achieve the Coalition for Pets and People's goal of "Zero in Seven" positive elimination of the killing of healthy and treatable animals at our government shelter.

In a recent meeting, a government official stated the "city and county needs to work together" and the "shelter director needs to be on board" to work with the animal welfare groups to embrace the opportunities and required modification of programs to meet mutually beneficial goals. These goals include obviously increased resources, availability and awareness for spay and neuter, microchipping, pet retention, adoption, and pet owner compliance with county and city animal control ordinances.

But this takes commitment, open and transparent communication, combined effective cost sharing, tolerance of limitations and trust by all those involved.

For too many years now, there has been a number of discussions and alternative solutions offered and supported but little movement toward resolution.

In truth, much of this effort has been initiated by the animal welfare groups seeking cooperation of the government agencies without significant success and often with resistance to change.

Recently, El Paso's Animal Control has undertaken an extensive program very similar to that supported and sought by the animal welfare groups of Las Cruces and Doña Ana County. Their plan for a government shelter-led effort to establish many of the programs being pursued locally should be a testament to the validity of the local groups' efforts.

Their program does require some expansion of their budget but within what is available for this year and recognizes the need for some increased spending in future years. Their new director recognizes that money spent today wisely in pursuit of long term goals pays dividends in the long term operation to address their needs. We can all learn from what they are implementing in El Paso.

The new El Paso director has shared his plan with us and we will be sharing that plan with our partners and county and city officials. The director also has extended an offer to work together with our organizations to address issues shared along our common borders. His outlook and vision will work well with our efforts if we choose to accept his invitation and follow his positive direction.

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