

On The Positive Side – Where is my lost pet?

by Frank Bryce, President, Humane Society of Southern New Mexico

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Several local animal welfare organizations are involved with stray animal return to owner efforts and according to the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico (HSSNM) there are regular successes and many heart warming stories. We are sure all these organizations have received calls from frantic, concerned and worried pet parents desperately seeking information about animal family members that have somehow strayed from the safety, care and love of their families. The system has responded and with the help of telephone trees alerting helpful private citizens many of the wayward furballs have been returned safely home. This is a very positive side of the story and all involved including the companion animal owners are to be commended.

The initial step and responsibility is for the pet parent to begin the search for a lost pet and as we review the process it becomes apparent that is a confusing and difficult task for many people. Fortunately, many pets return home on their own after a little misadventure and a short time. However, the sooner the search process can be initiated the more likely a positive outcome and safe return.

Obviously, it is important the pet is wearing a tag and identification, is micro-chipped, vaccinated and you have a photograph to share to insure all involved have the best chance to help return the pet healthy and safe. A "lost" animal report should be called in to the Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley (382-0018) as soon as possible and everyday visits made to the center to physically look for the pet. You can ask the ASCMV staff to check their "found" animal reports but it is your ultimate responsibility to review this reports. Your neighbors, where possible, should be alerted to watch for the pet and report sightings.

There are no less than eight primary agencies to contact to cover all the bases and the way these are listed makes them difficult to find. The total number of possible agencies to contact and what each can do to help is mind boggling even to those of us who are familiar with the system. A great help is Action Programs for Animals website www.actionprogramsforanimals.org. Another good contact is the HSSNM Pet Help Line (523-8020) or www.hssnm.org. Central dispatch has informed us that while city and county animal control officers are not dispatched to search for lost animals, the central dispatch operator (526-0795) will contact animal control officers and ask them to contact persons reporting lost animals to be aware of the reports and assist as possible.

We suggest you cut out the contact list provided in the Sun News Critter Corner and tape it to your refrigerator door so it is handy for you or to assist your neighbors with safe return of pets. This not only helps you and your neighbors and makes it safer for your pets but reduces the time, effort and cost to animal control, the ASCMV and all those concerned folks who get involved when a pet is lost. Being a responsible pet owner is something said a lot and that role is shared by all of us.

Frank Bryce is President of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico. Interested authors for "On The Positive Side" can contact HSSNM at (575) 523-8020.