

On The Positive Side: How Can You help This Stray?

August 12, 2011

Frank Bryce, President, Humane Society of Southern New Mexico

Two weeks ago we wrote what people who had lost a pet could do to find and retrieve their canine or feline family member and we covered much of what should be done from that perspective. However, that is only one side of a spinning coin which we want to stop on edge for a positive conclusion. It seems that many of us are at a loss as to how to handle the unexpected arrival of a loving furball that needs our help to get back home. This can be the beginning of a slippery slope for so many companions that can lead to unwanted and unnecessary situations with serious consequences for a loving companion without some help from you. What would you want your neighbor to do if it was your family companion?

Here is where pet responsibility expands from the pet owner to the neighbor or compassionate bystander who is willing to get involved. Of course, if the animal is possibly injured or poses a threat to others or itself, contacting Central Dispatch at 575-526-0795 is the immediate step to take to protect people, other pets and the animal. A county or city animal control unit can be dispatched for help.

If it seems healthy and friendly and a secure safe holding area is available, you can start the rescue process from that point. Checking the companion for tags and identifying collar may be all that is required to send this wayward waif back home. If no collar or tags are found, a most important step is to call in a "found pet" report to the Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley at 382-0018 to see if a "lost pet" report matches the situation.

A call to the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico's Pet Helpline at 523-8020 or Action Programs for Animals at 644-0505 with a similar report will get the animal on those websites. A sweetie should be taken to your veterinary clinic or the shelter to be scanned for a micro-chip which very often is successful in reuniting furballs with family. A leashed walk around your neighborhood (good exercise for all of us) and knocking on a few doors may help find the family home frantically searching already for your new friend.

The city and county ordinances require notification of the possession of a rescued animal after 24 hours to city animal control at 528-4100 or county animal control at 647-7715 but you, with appropriate actions, retaining possession of the animal for a day or longer reduces the number of animals overflowing at our shelter, reduces stress for the stray and virtually eliminates disease exposure at the shelter. We all share in humane response to animals in need of help – it makes us better people, better neighbors and better citizens of our communities.

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.