

On the Positive Side: Sheltering Is Pointless...Until The Need Is Reduced

By Frank Bryce / For the Sun-News

Posted: 09/07/2012 01:56:13 AM MDT

The following information is from research by the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico to promote the Coalition of Pets and People. It is startling that problems faced here are faced around the nation and the globe. The Coalition for Pets and People is diligently pursuing much the same philosophy outlined by the article.

Titled "Sheltering is Pointless...Until the Need is Reduced", the first paragraph states "We live in a deeply depressed, impoverished, remote and backward corner of the far side of hell... Please help us fund a shelter to house 100 of them." Perhaps this is an overstatement for some but for many area companion animals kernels of truth are undeniable. The article further states "Such pleas are heartrending, but under such circumstances, either operating or funding a shelter is pointless, mindless, and likely to only rearrange the misery in that particular part of hell's overcrowded and starving half acre...But until the numbers of homeless dogs and cats are markedly reduced, and until the public shows increased sympathy and tolerance toward them, putting money into shelter work makes less sense than using money for cat litter."

Supporting the work of the cooperating animal welfare organizations and involved individuals effort to reverse our local pet over-population issues, the article says "Fortunately, putting sterilization, vaccination , and public education first is the least costly way to get started...This work must come before sheltering, because whether or not pet keepers can afford sterilization and vaccination, or are responsible enough to do it, it still needs to be done. If sterilization and vaccination is properly promoted, and humane education is successful, a community will never need conventional animal control shelters." The Coalition for Pets and People and its collaborating partners are headed that direction as fast as possible

The article writes "The public must understand that without community support, nothing can be accomplished. The public must understand a successful anti-pet overpopulation project, and must feel inspired to cooperate with it. This excludes the blame-the-public attitudes and rhetoric that persist among too many animal rescuers, especially those who maintain shelters as a perceived bastion against a cruel and uncaring world that they seldom actually try to engage... because enough shelter space can never be built to contain every dog and cat without a home.... No matter how many dogs and cats are killed, the fertile remainder can always breed rapidly up to carrying capacity of the habitat, somewhere between becoming a public nuisance and suffering actual starvation." This is borne out by our community shelter with 200 plus cages regularly housing about five hundred animals daily and killing almost 9,000 yearly.

This article goes on to outline many similar on-going efforts for fostering and adoption networks that are expanding in our own community. For all of the dark shadow cast by this article, the direction it gives is hopeful. Even more hopeful is the direction being taken by all those involved in Coalition effort. In the coming weeks and months many of the projects and new programs will be implemented. In closing the article states "If the population is controlled, which must always be the first priority, the relatively few animals who require special care could be housed as efficiently in all but the biggest cities by shelterless nonprofit humane societies, using foster homes or boarding facilities. A lofty goal for all of us but together, with the help of those involved in the coalition, our communities can do this.

Frank Bryce is President of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico. Interested guest authors can contact HSSNM at 575-523-8020.