



Animal Protective Association of Socorro

Barks and Mews

October 2017 Newsletter

Transport Programs Give Shelter Dogs New Lease On Life

What are animal shelters to do when they take in more animals than can be adopted locally? All too often the answer has been euthanasia. This is a serious problem in New Mexico. In 2011, nearly half of the animals coming into shelters, statewide, were killed there. The Socorro shelter that year put down more than 60 animals each month (numbers from survey by Animal Protection of New Mexico).

How can this sad situation be fixed? Ideally, pet owners would sterilize their animals to prevent unwanted litters that end up overpopulating local shelters. Some areas, such as Denver, require and enforce pet sterilization, but that's uncommon. Spay/neuter laws are hard to pass, and may not make sense unless affordable spay/neuter is widely available. Other ways must be found to help these animals.

In recent years, an "overground pet railroad" has offered help. These volunteer-run programs rescue pets from high-kill shelters and find them safe havens in other areas where the demand for adoptable animals exceeds the local supply. Several transport

programs have been working in New Mexico, usually rescuing dogs from high-kill shelters in rural areas and moving them to Colorado or Utah where they are wanted. In Socorro alone, such transport programs have given hundreds of dogs a new lease on life in the past few years.

In 2014, the Socorro shelter and APAS began working with Positive Paws in Albuquerque. Once every week or two, volunteers used their own cars to drive shelter dogs to Albuquerque, where they were met by people who kept the dogs overnight. Sometimes the dogs were adopted locally, but more often they went on to foster organizations in Colorado or Utah. The photos, courtesy of Nelia Dunbar, give an idea of a typical transport: how many dogs, in how many crates, can one fit in a small car?



Unfortunately, Positive Paws did not last. Financial problems led to its demise in 2016, and the Socorro shelter has had to find other options. At present, the shelter manager—Pat Gonzales—does transport runs when he can. He typically fills a van with 60 or so animals and drives them to Cortez, Colorado,

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where he transfers the animals to another rescue group that drives them on to Utah.

These transport programs can be effective. Gonzales says the shelter now puts down only animals too sick, or too aggressive, to be adopted—a major turnaround from the high kill rate of a few years ago. However, transport programs are not a final solution. They are expensive, heavily reliant on volunteers, and can't offset New Mexico's continuing disregard of responsible pet ownership forever. But for now—as one transport driver in California put it—“this effort only makes a small dent in a big problem, but it makes a big difference to the animals that are on my bus”.

—Jean Eilek



Low-cost spay and neuter services available

Proper care of a pet includes being able to feed it and attend to its medical needs. Spaying and neutering is one of the best ways you can care for your dog or cat, as well as reduce the number of unwanted pets in our community. For many, however, this procedure may put a strain on the budget, particularly if there is a multiple-pet family. APAS's low-cost spay and neuter program was begun to aid pet owners whose financial circumstances might force them to relinquish to our shelter a beloved pet they can no longer afford to care for and, sometimes, that pet's unwanted litters.

APAS's financial assistance is offered to residents of Socorro County whose annual income falls below federal poverty guidelines. APAS will cover 75% of the cost of spay/neuter surgery at either local veterinary clinics, The Ark of Socorro (575-835-9002) or Animal Haven (575-835-3545). To get more details about this program, please contact our spay/neuter coordinator, Dorothy Brook, at 575-835-0259. Since September 1 of this year Dorothy has received 30 calls about the program. Of those inquiries, 18 individuals actually got coupons from one of the participating veterinary clinics.

Cat owners in New Mexico can get their indoor feline pets sterilized AT NO COST through the Zimmer Foundation. Income qualifications also apply for this program. Find more information at their website www.zimmer-foundation.org/pgm1Pgm-Desc.html. You can also call them at 505-466-1676.

Besides reducing the number of pets in our shelter, there are additional benefits to spaying or neutering your pet. For example:

- Your pet will live a longer, healthier life protected from some types of infection and cancer.
- Female pet won't go into heat, and males will be less inclined to roam and fight with other males.
- Spayed and neutered pets are more focused on their human families and better behaved.
- Spaying or neutering will not make your pet fat if you still provide exercise and don't overfeed.

Please share this information with your friends and neighbors.

—Jane Love

Socorro Shelter's Fabulous Summer Cat Sale

When folks decide to add a wonderful feline companion to their family and take the trip to their local shelter, it is hard to deny that most cat lovers succumb to the adorable nature of kittens. Sure, kittens adjust better to their new environments and tend to get along with any other animals in the household, but their high energy makes them also high maintenance.

If a potential adopter is looking for a cat that might not beg for so much time and attention, then it's time to take a look at an adult cat. An adult cat may carry some life experience baggage, but they can be extremely appreciative of a new home and family. Many just want to live out their golden years surrounded by love.

Most shelter staff can recount many an instance when a mother cat and her kittens were brought in, only to have the kittens promptly adopted while Mama spends many lonely months hoping that someone will take her home. So it was at the Socorro Animal Shelter and Adoption Center this past summer. At least two dozen kittens came and went while seven grown cats, two of them mother cats, sat waiting for a cat lover to make them a forever pet. At APAS's June meeting it was proposed by one of our members that we talk to the shelter and offer to pay half the adoption fee for any cat over a year old for the month of July. The shelter was more than happy to take us up on our offer, and the word went out online and through posters for the shelter's



“Fabulous Half Price Cat Sale,” for any cat over a year. It was a huge success! In July, four of the seven adult cats got adopted using our funds. With such good luck, it was proposed at our August meeting to extend our half price offer until the end of the month, and it was approved unanimously. By the end of August, two more cats were adopted together, leaving only one sad fellow, who was eventually transported to the Deming Animal Shelter, where there is always a shortage of cats, so hopefully even he found a forever home.

Without the generosity of our members, we wouldn't have been able to make this offer and make six adult cats very happy. Thank you all so much!

—Stephanie Mitchell



Animal Protective Association of Socorro

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Please mail this form and donation to: APAS, PO Box 451, Socorro, NM 87801.

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