

The heartache of losing a beloved pet is difficult enough - feeling responsible for it's loss is even more painful. There are some things you can do now to help prevent a loss or improve the chances of your pets return.

(1) Pets without ID are seldom returned. Rabies vaccinations are required for all dogs and cats in Valencia County. The rabies tag has your veterinarians name and phone number, as well as a vaccination number. Putting a collar with the rabies tag on your pet gives animal control, or your neighbor, a way to track him back to you. Many pet stores, veterinarians, and mail order catalogs offer customized tags of every size, color and price range. These tags make it easier for the average person to contact you directly if they find your pet.

You might want to consider having your veterinarian insert a microchip identification. As small as a grain of rice, even a Chihuahua can carry your name, address and phone number where ever he goes. The Valencia County Animal Shelter, Albuquerque Animal Services and many of Valencia County's veterinarians have microchip identification and scanning devices able to read the microchips.

(2) Check your fences for damage - often. It doesn't take long for a bored animal to dig under, chew through or find a way over most fencing. The added measure of a "hot wire" to deter a persistent escape artist may well be worth the effort and expense. "Invisible fencing" with the accompanying shock collar is an option some owners prefer. However, though it may keep your pet at home, it will not keep strays out!

(3) A major cause for pets to stray is the strong urge to reproduce. Spaying or neutering your pet as early as possible will reduce the desire to wander and prevent some reproductive cancers, as well.

(4) Take good quality photos of your pet from several angles so you can describe, in detail, your pets distinguish

"LOST DOG"



ing characteristics on the phone or on fliers. It can be surprisingly difficult to remember which foot was white or how the tail or ears were set without a good photo in hand.

(5) Obedience classes will help you to learn how to control your dog when off-leash. The gate accidentally left open, or an open car door in an unfamiliar place, are a couple of examples of the split second you may have to save your dog from being a stray. You will also find that you will have a stronger bond with your best friend with a few hours a week in training.

If the worst should happen and your pet is lost the following are some of things you can do to find him:

(1) If your pet was lost in Valencia County, go to the Valencia County shelter every other day, if possible. Strays are kept only three days there, so don't take a chance on missing him. Give a good description and leave a photo or flyer with the staff. Though your pet is special to you, over a hundred animals a week go through their doors and many look very much alike.

If your pet is found by someone who lives or works in Albuquerque it could be taken to either of the two Albuquerque Animal Services facilities or the Animal Humane of New Mexico. You may have a little more time between visits to find him in one of these places, but you must be persistent in checking.

(2) Use your photos to make fliers. Hang them at the shelter, with veterinarians, groomers, or any business willing to post them in the area where your pet was lost. Include a good description, the area last seen, reward (if offered) and a phone numbers where you can be reached.

(3) Place a "lost" ad in your local paper. The News Bulletin offers the first ad for free and additional issues for \$5.00. The Albuquerque Journal also offers a free lost or found service. Check with any other media to see if they will publish or announce your ad for a reduced fee. Remember, the person who finds your pet may not recognize the breed so give a physical description to help them identify your pet.

(4) Contact the local rescue organizations. A good Samaritan may bring your pet to a rescue instead of the shelters. They may assume that a pet without identification is abandoned. Again, be very specific in your description of the lost animal, when and where it was last seen.

Be prepared for the worst but enjoy every minute you have with your best friend.

Judy Babcock, Quixote Humane, Inc.

The animals pictured below are only available for three days, but there are plenty of other choices! Visit the Valencia County Shelter, 1209 NM 314, one mile south of Main Street in Los Lunas. Open 8:00 am - 4:00 pm Tues - Sat. 866-2479