

# Ticks Are More Than Just Annoying

By Quixote Humane, Inc.

In just the first six months of the year over 3,000 animals have been impounded at the Valencia county shelter. Of those, only about 5% were reclaimed by their owners and 10% were adopted into new families. A remarkable 15% were transferred into other shelters and rescue organizations - the equivalent to the combination of owner reclaims and adoptions at the shelter! Our volunteers evaluate the thousands of impounded animals and try to select the few we can help.

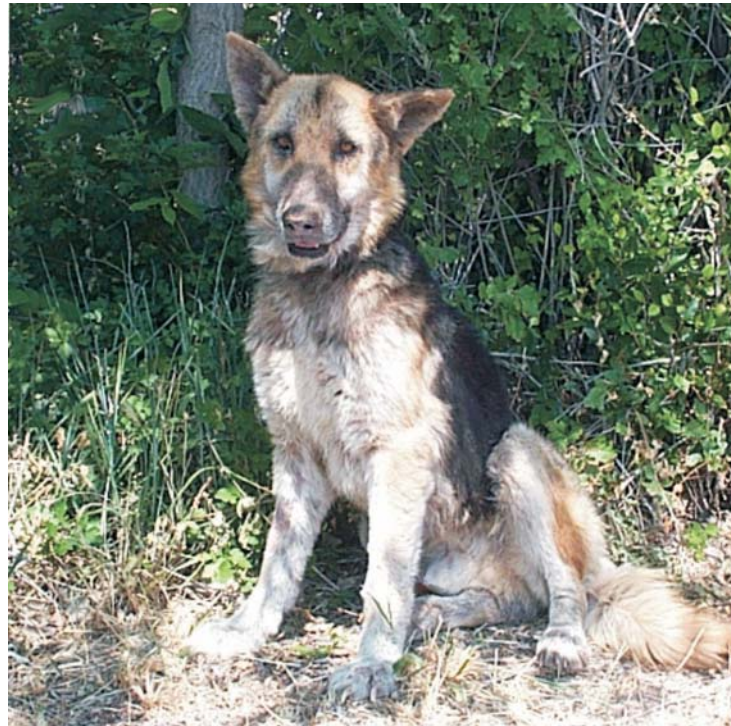
It is difficult to choose which dogs and cats we should try to get into rescue organizations. The majority of the animals at the shelter could be placed in new homes if there was enough space to hold them and money to care for them until the right family was found. There is limited space and funds within the rescues, as well, so we look for those animals we think can be placed the quickest - usually. But, sometimes the heart gets in the way.

Frazier was one of those special cases. A very thin, older German Shepherd with a horrible coat, crusty nose, infected eyes; yet his air demanded we make the effort to save him.

He was heartworm negative and his initial blood panel didn't indicate anything out of the ordinary for a typical neglected dog. Good food and grooming should have been all he needed to get him ready for a new home. And, in the first couple of weeks, he seemed to make progress - but then he lost his appetite and became lethargic. Another vial of blood was drawn and sent for a more in-depth analysis, including testing for tick borne diseases.

Frazier's test results showed he was positive for Ehrlichia, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Lyme Disease.

Dozens of cases of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Ehrlichia have been recorded in dogs in Valencia county since January of this year. Ticks that transmit both of these diseases are common in our state. Frazier's is the only case reported of Lyme Disease. The group of ticks, including the tiny deer tick that transmits Lyme Disease, are not known to thrive here. It is



possible that Frazier contracted Lyme Disease in a northern state before coming to New Mexico. Symptoms usually do not appear until 2 to 5 months after exposure. It may also be possible that he was vaccinated to prevent Lyme Disease and blood test showed antibodies from the shot. Without his medical history we will never know.

With his compromised condition, and facing the many challenging, long-term health issues from these diseases, we decided it was in his best interest to put Frazier to sleep. We appreciate the heartfelt words of support and donations to his care. Frazier was held with love and released with compassion.

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Lyme are two diseases that can be contracted by both humans and animals. There are several other tick borne diseases that are transmitted only to animals or only to humans.

Livestock and wildlife, including: birds, rodents, predators and game animals are intermediate hosts to ticks that may eventually attach themselves to you or your pet.

The bosque, fields, and meadows are inviting habitat for ticks. Most ticks lay in wait for mammals passing by to hitch a ride and have a blood meal. Because ticks go through several growth stages they may feed on several hosts in their life cycle. After feeding on an animal carrying a disease they can transmit it to another mammal that is susceptible to that disease.

Clearing away brush and keeping your yard tidy will help eliminate tick breeding grounds near your home. After a walk in grassy or wooded areas it is wise to check yourself and your animals for ticks.

There are lots of new products on the market that will reel and/or kill ticks on your pets. Some of these products kill only fleas and some can cause skin irritation so be sure to read the package carefully and use them cautiously.

Even if you use repellents, it is important to examine your pet often and remove any ticks you find. Use tweezers to grasp the tick close to the skin and gently pull it away from your pet's body. Dab the site with alcohol. Avoid crushing the tick while it is still attached, as it can spread disease through the contaminated blood.

If you remove an attached tick, watch for signs of illness, such as: fever, lethargy, lameness, dizziness or seizures. Keep yourself and your pets safe from tick borne diseases through prevention. Talk to your veterinarian and follow his recommendations.

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