

Fall 2017

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DogCruces

Information for the Las Cruces Dog Lover!



ACTing Like Heroes

ACTION Programs for Animals helps needy families feed their pets, and has saved more than 3000 animals from the shelter—*so far!*

Page 21

Above & Beyond

What's a foster parent to do when the new dog shows up with parvo? Whatever it takes!

Page 19

Friend or Fiend?

Perhaps no breed is as misunderstood (or misrepresented) as the Pit Bull. We attempt to separate fact from fiction to better understand why our shelter (and others) are overflowing with Pitties—while Pit parents praise their dogs without reservation.

Page 14

Won't You Be My Neighbor?

Page 12

Some of the best folks (and animals!) you'll ever meet might be closer than you know.

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Ch-Ch-Ch-Changes

I usually make some reference to the changing of the seasons here—because we publish Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall issues of the magazine, of course. But this time I want to talk about the Changing of the Guard—at the Animal Service Center—instead.

A lot has happened during the last few months, and one of the biggest changes has been former ASCMV Director Dr. Beth leaving town for a new job. At first there was a lot of uncertainty at the shelter, but I'm happy to say that Bernice Navarro and Paul Richardson, as Interim Co-Directors, have done a great job taking over and making things happen. The animal community has come together to help Bernice and Paul with new rescue transports and new volunteers to assist at the shelter—but more help is *always* needed.

Speaking of volunteers ... I had the pleasure of being involved in the hiring process for the new Volunteer Coordinator for the shelter. Dominique Clark is an awesome addition to the team and has already hit the ground running with some great new ideas. We look forward to working with her on new projects. I also recently got to meet the top five candidates seeking the Director position, though I'm not at all involved with *that* hiring process. By the time this issue hits the stands, the new director will have already been named—we went to press just before the announcement. Darn! Dog'Cruces looks forward to continuing a positive relationship with the shelter, with whomever is at the helm. I know what a *huge* and difficult job it is, and we wish the new director all the success in the world. Let us know how we can help!

I've spent a lot of time up at the shelter during this transition—more than usual—and my heart never fails to break when I walk in and see the kennels

practically overflowing with homeless dogs. It's so overwhelming that I never really noticed what breeds were represented—except, of course, the Golden Retrievers! But by becoming more familiar with the shelter surroundings, I began to notice the unbelievable number of Pit Bulls and Pit mixes that make up the population at ASCMV. So many of them will never leave the shelter alive. Why? How? What has to happen to make this change?

We asked Phyllis Wright to try to discover the truth about the breed(s), and her cover story reveals that popularity, prejudice, and propaganda have all played a role in determining the ill fate of so many Pitties.

One local animal organization working tirelessly on behalf of Pit Bulls is ACTION Programs for Animals. Founder Michel Meunier and two like-minded friends began the group back in 2009, and they have built APA into a local powerhouse helping people and animals, alike. Read APA's story on page 21, and go have fun at their annual *Pits for Peace and Pizza Fest* on October 22nd.

But this issue is not all Pit Bulls! Dr. Pirtle follows up his "what makes your dog itch" article with the very welcome "how to treat your itchy dog" column. Jamie Jones took in a rescue dog that had Parvo—which presented a whole different set of challenges than her normal role as a foster pet parent. Walter had to share his mom for a few days with the victims of Hurricane Harvey; Kat's Kormer reminds us all to include our pets in our disaster preparations; and a *kitten* features prominently in Jess' column this time. I can't imagine Toby is pleased....

And finally, two words—*Pet Expo*! And one more word—*Amazing*! We were delighted with every

aspect of the first-ever Dog'Cruces Pet Expo in September at the Convention Center. You never know what to expect with a first-time event of this magnitude and, boy, were we surprised! The number of people attending—with their pets—exceeded our expectations. A huge thank you goes out to everyone who made this possible—to our local business sponsors, to all the folks who agreed to do demonstrations and seminars, to the vendors who set up booths, to the animal organizations who lined the hallways (lots of furry friends were adopted over the weekend!), to the wonderful people at Las Cruces Event Planning and those who staff the Convention Center, and especially to everyone who attended! You better believe we'll be back—bigger and better—next year!

I can't really say for sure, but I *think* we witnessed a truly exciting and unexpected result from the Pet Expo, as well. A week and a half later, at the September Yappy Hour, we had the biggest crowd of dogs and humans we've ever seen. So many had never attended before, and I certainly recognized some of the folks I'd met at the Expo. Way to go, Dog'Cruces—our little community continues to grow!

Vic Villalobos
Mayor of Dog'Cruces

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Doggie

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pizza slices and beer for purchase, dog adoptions, raffles, a low-cost vaccination clinic, microchipping, a Halloween Costume Contest for dogs, and a Pizza Flipping Contest.

RECURRING & ONGOING EVENTS

FALL 2017

Rudy's to the Rescue

Thursday, November 2nd

Thursday, December 7th

Thursday, January 4th

Rudy's Country Store and Bar-B-Q, 1020 N. Telshor Blvd., from 4:30pm-7pm. Benefits Safe Haven Animal Sanctuary.

OCTOBER

October 1st - 31st

Better Life's Halloween Costume Contest

Better Life Natural Pet Foods, 315 S. Telshor Blvd and 365 Avenida de Mesilla, during normal business hours. Entry fee \$5 will be donated to APA. Ten winners will be awarded this year! Entrants MUST come into the store, IN costume. The staff will take a picture to be posted on Better Life Natural Pet Foods' Facebook page. Finalists will be determined based on number of "likes" their

Saturday, October 21st

SHAS Adoption/Donation Event

Wild Birds Unlimited, 2001 E. Lohman Ave, from 10am-2pm. Celebrating resident rescue dogs' birthdays.

Sunday, October 22nd

APA's 6th Annual Pits for Peace and Pizza Fest

Grapevine Plaza Event Center (home of the Picacho Peak Brewing Company), 3900 W. Picacho, from 12pm-5pm. All well behaved, leashed dogs are welcome. There will be

Saturday, October 28th

SHAS Adoption/Donation Event

PetSmart, 2200 E. Lohman Ave, from 10:30am-2:30pm.

National Pit Bull Awareness Day

Celebrating 10 years of advocacy. This is a day of appreciation and education designed to change perceptions and stereotypes about Pit Bulls and their responsible owners.

Tuesday, October 31st

Halloween-Themed Photo Booth Fundraiser

Safe Haven Thrift Store, 840-D El Paseo, from 2pm-5:45pm. Treats for all ages, refreshments and more! Pets welcome on leash.

NOVEMBER

Adopt a Senior Pet Month!

Saturday, November 4th

APA Adoption and Donation Drive

The New Neighborhood Walmart, 150 Sonoma Ranch Blvd, from 11am-4pm.





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Dates



Saturday, November 11th and Sunday, November 12th
Customer Appreciation Weekend at Better Life Natural Pet Foods

Better Life Natural Pet Foods, 315 S. Telshor Blvd and 365 Avenida de Mesilla, 10am-6pm. Weekend of FUN, huge discounts, prizes, and activities! Both locations will be participating Saturday, only the Telshor location on Sunday (Avenida de Mesilla store is closed Sundays). Join Better Life in celebrating shopping local and 20 years in business!

Saturday, November 19th

APA Adoption and Donation Drive

PetSmart, 2200 E. Lohman Ave (next to Old Navy), from 11am-4pm. APA is also seeking donations of pet food, treats, cat litter, pill pockets, toys and other items for APA's rescued animals and pet food bank.

Saturday, November 24th through Thursday, November 30th

NY Dog Film Festival Coming to Las Cruces!

Fountain Theatre, 2469

Calle De Guadalupe, evenings at 7:30pm.

Sunday, November 26th matinee at 2:30pm and Thursday, November 30th matinee at 1:30pm. Two different programs will screen on alternating days. Program 1 is "Second Chances" (71 minutes) and Program 2 is "Love Changes Everything" (65 minutes). The two programs are completely different and feature a medley of films celebrating the love between dogs and their people. Both films are MUST SEES and are appropriate for everyone in the family. Tickets available at the door. For more info go to www.dogfilm-festival.com/destinations-list-1/11/24/lascrucesnm.



Saturday, November 25th
SHAS Adoption Event

PetSmart, 2200 Lohman Ave, from 10:30am-2:30pm.

DECEMBER

Saturday, December 23rd
SHAS Adoption Event

PetSmart, 2200 Lohman Ave, from 10:30am-2:30pm.

JANUARY

Monday, January 1st
Doggie New Year's Resolutions

Include your entire family in your New Year's Resolutions plans for better health. Take your pooch for a walk, brush his teeth, and eat healthier. Volunteer, donate, adopt, educate, advocate in 2018—the Year of the Dog!

Thursday, January 18th

Dog'Cruces Winter Issue on Stands!



For a complete calendar of events, visit
DogCruces.com

List is updated as events are announced



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A Rash of Treatment

As I write this, it is early September, and allergy season is upon us. The summer rains have worked their magic and both the desert and the Mesilla Valley are as green as they ever get. Unfortunately, much of the vegetation that grows this time of year is either a weed or a flower that produces huge amounts of pollen. And just as many of us humans are sensitive to that pollen, a large percentage of dogs suffer from allergies, as well.

However, the target organ for allergies is different for dogs. Humans suffer with the classic respiratory signs of hay fever such as sneezing, coughing, runny nose and itchy eyes. For dogs, the main organ system impacted is the skin—so our furry friends suffer from itchy skin, rashes, and sometimes complications such as infections and hair loss. In the last edition of *DogCruces* I discussed the many causes of itching in dogs. In this issue I'll introduce the many different treatments for itching, particularly related to allergic skin problems since they are the predominant cause of itching for our pets. But remember, the causes of itching in dogs can be difficult to unravel, so it's always best to see your veterinarian to arrive at a diagnosis prior to treating your dog with anything available over-the-counter. Most of the more effective treatments will be prescription medications that will require a visit to your vet.

Topical Medications

Some of the more common options to relieve itching include shampoos and sprays. Many are available without a prescription. Although they can have a place in the treatment of skin rashes and itching, most of these products provide only low levels of their active ingredients, so most dogs with significant itching won't get much relief from these products. Think twice about spending your money in the pet product aisle at the grocery store if your dog is significantly itchy. Your veterinarian may certainly prescribe topical products, but these are much more likely to be medicated with better or more potent active ingredients than the over-the-counter items.

Dietary Supplements/Foods

The internet is full of magic powders and pills to

improve dogs' skin and haircoat and to control itching. I'd still say "buyer beware." Most of these special vitamins or dietary supplements have no proof of effectiveness—except in separating you from your money. Most dogs receive adequate nutrition in their commercial diet, and adding a supplement or vitamin is unlikely to do anything extra to improve your pet's skin condition.

One product that is scientifically shown to decrease inflammation in the skin and other organs is a quality fatty acid supplement. Essential fatty acids, omega 3's, fish oils—they come in a num-

**...many over-the-counter
antihistamines are combined with
other medications for congestion,
coughing, fever, etc. Always be sure
you are using only the antihistamine
your veterinarian has recommended
and at the dosage suggested.**

ber of forms—can actually shift the chemicals in the skin towards some less inflammatory pathways and can play a small role in diminishing itching. They take from several weeks to months to have full effect, and I use them as more of a long-term, adjunctive therapy for dogs with chronic itching or skin conditions. For acute, se-

vere itching you are unlikely to see any significant benefit with these products.

As far as dog food is concerned...yes, some dogs are truly allergic to something in their diet. But pollens and environmental allergies are far more prevalent than food allergies, and dogs that are food allergic are frequently allergic to these environmental allergens as well. Before you switch to a different food, I'd suggest consulting your veterinarian and having him or her help unravel the mystery of a food allergy. Rarely will switching from one brand of dog food to another (even if it says "grain free") solve the problem. There are certainly exceptions, and I know many of you feel strongly that changing your pet's diet has made a difference in how much your dog scratches. But from my perspective, changes in diet have to be implemented in a scientifically sound fashion and for a proper amount of time to help document true food allergies. This issue could fill a whole article by itself, so again, I'll leave this to you and your veterinarian.

Antihistamines

One of the main group of chemicals responsible for allergic reactions is histamines. Medications that block the action of these chemicals can help significantly reduce the inflammation and reaction



DogCruces Fall 2017

The Vet's View

by
Dr. Scott Pirtle, DVM

Options For Itchy Dogs

to them. These medications, logically called “anti” histamines, are a major treatment option for us humans when dealing with our hay fever. There are several of these medications in over-the-counter and prescription form that can be very effective for us in dealing with our allergies. Some of these medications can be quite helpful for our dogs as well, but they do not seem to be nearly as efficient or effective for dogs as they are for people. I use this group of medications all the time to treat allergic dogs, but when allergy season is in full swing and pollen counts go through the roof, antihistamines will not be potent enough for many dogs to keep their itching under control. Before you use any of these medications, please consult with your veterinarian for proper dosing and to make sure there are no interactions with any other medications your pet might be taking. Also, many over-the-counter antihistamines are combined with other medications for congestion, coughing, fever, etc. Always be sure you are using *only* the antihistamine your veterinarian has recommended and at the dosage suggested. Do not use any combination products that contain multiple medications.

Steroids

Now we are getting down to the big guns for treatment of allergies. Corticosteroids (cortisone derivatives) are extremely effective at treating the symptoms of allergic skin disease. These are prescription medications and must be used under the supervision and direction of your veterinarian. The possibility or likelihood of side-effects is very high with these types of medications, and combining them with other medications can be very dangerous. Only use them as directed by your veterinarian and for the time-frame advised. Long-term therapy is usually discouraged. I find this group of drugs to be invaluable in getting severely allergic dogs under control. However, I always advise dog owners that this is a temporary solution and if their pet requires longer term treatment we need to consider some of our other options.

Immunotherapy

Immunotherapy has long been considered the gold

standard for medical management of allergies in dogs. In simple terms, immunotherapy is a process of retraining a dog's immune system so that the reaction to whatever it is allergic to is minimized. Testing is done to establish what the dog is allergic to, and then some form of injection or oral drops are given to the dog on a regular schedule—and at gradually increasing concentration—to change the dog's immune response to its allergens. This type of treatment is relatively expensive compared to most other options, and it requires considerable time to achieve full effectiveness. But for many dogs with a chronic allergic skin issue it can be an invaluable aid in keeping their itching under control. This is another option that you should consult your veterinarian about if your dog has severe or chronic allergies.

New Therapies

Some very exciting new medications have become available to help veterinarians treat allergic skin disease in dogs. These drugs have unique mechanisms of action that help stop some of the complex chemical reactions involved in allergies. One of these medications, oclacitinib (brand name Apoquel®), is what is called a cytokine inhibitor. Cytokines are chemical messages sent between cells. This medication blocks some of the cytokines that are responsible for sending the message for itching. Another new medication is canine atopic dermatitis immunotherapeutic (CADI)(brand name Cytopoint®). This injectable agent is an antibody against Interleukin 31—a major chemical that is significantly responsible for itching in allergic dogs. The antibody binds to the inflammatory chemical and blocks it from causing inflammation. Both of these new medications must be used under careful veterinary supervision and may not be appropriate for some dogs with allergic skin issues. However, these are becoming some of my favorite new options for treating allergic dogs and have proven to be an invaluable addition to my “allergy toolbox.”

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Casting a Very Bright Light

by
Jess Williams



Many years ago, I was a little lost and lonely on a Saturday night, so I decided to go for a walk. I live in a neighborhood where many of the lots have two dwellings on them.

Across the street, one of those back properties had the lights on, and the car was in the drive, and I thought to myself, "Tonight's as good a night as any to say hello to a neighbor." So I knocked on the door, and the lovely lady asked me in, and we've been pretty much inseparable friends ever since.

Her name is Rachel Schneider, and she's amazing. She's wildly smart, unfailingly funny and possessed of the biggest heart I've ever known any human to carry around inside.

On the occasion of her most recent birthday, a cabal of people conspired to throw a surprise party. Shortly after 6 pm one special Thursday, Rachel walked onto the patio of Andele's Dog House in Mesilla, where she was greeted by a roar of "SURPRISE!"

There ensued tears of joy as she worked the sizeable crowd, hugging family and friends, old and new. The look on her face was one of shock and gratitude. Off to the side, her sister, Andrea—owner of the Dog House and one of the primary party conspirators—grinned a grin that can only be described as maniacally fantastic.

About halfway through Rachel's plunge into the crowd, she came upon her Significant Other, Keith Whelpley, who held out a small critter kennel with a sign on top that read, "Would you like to be my Mommy?"

Rachel's eyes flew wide and she asked/screamed, "Is it Andy Taylor?!?!?"

Keith nodded in the affirmative. Key the water-works.

Andy Taylor is one of the many kittens that Rachel and Keith have fostered for Action Program for Animals. But Andy was the kitten that wrapped his heart around Rachel's heart. She wanted so badly to keep him, but after much deliberation, the decision was made to let him go through the adoption process like the other kittens fortunate enough to spend their formative weeks in the Schneider/Whelpley home.

Except—unbeknownst to Rachel—Keith had other plans, what with Rachel's birthday approaching and all.

Andy Taylor calmly made the rounds of the birthday festivities, but he always ended up back in Rachel's arms. Toby—who was there with me—shot me a look that said, "That kitten seems to be more popular than I am. What are you going to do about that?" I shrugged. It's a tough world out there, kiddo.

At the insistence of the party planners—all of whom know Rachel's heart and sensibilities—guests were prohibited from bringing gifts to the party.

Instead, donations were accepted for Action Program for Animals. There were bags of dog food and sacks of kitty litter. There were envelopes with cash and checks tucked inside. There was love everywhere, and a good cause unfolding, and an opportunity for all of us who love both Rachel and the critters of the Mesilla Valley to do a good thing for both.

I had the good fortune that evening to share a table with Rachel's mom, Linda, whose sparkling blue eyes and easy smile make it easy to see where Rachel and Andrea get their spark for life and gentleness of soul.

Linda insisted on feeding Toby table scraps while we were there. I could see there was no point trying to argue about it, and so I kept my mouth shut. Toby did not. He was snarking chicken scraps from her fingers as if he hadn't been fed since the Obama Administration.

At every table, there was laughter and love ricocheting around. Rachel—with Andy Taylor clutched tight against her breast—made sure to stop by and visit with everyone for a few minutes, and to share her gratitude for the outpouring of love and happiness.

Of course, it was all of us there who had reason to be grateful and happy, because we're fortunate enough to orbit the Amazing World of Rachel, and to feed off both her boundless energy and her bottomless desire to do good in our community.

We could all feel it, there on the patio of Andele's. But I think Andy Taylor—he who has a new home—felt it most of all.

The moral of the story is this: If on some nondescript Saturday night, you find yourself feeling a little lost and lonely, I highly recommend that you wander your neighborhood and see whose lights are on. Introduce yourself. It may just change your life for the better. It sure did mine!

Jess Williams is chairman of the board of directors of the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley. Toby is a Yorkshire terrier who can steal almost as many hearts on a patio as a kitten named Andy Taylor. Rachel Schneider runs the Ol' Gringo Chile Company, and her heart is as warm as the salsa marked "hot." Happy Birthday, Rachel! You go, Andy Taylor!





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We asked Phyllis Wright to step outside her normal “intrepid reporter” role and put on her researcher’s hat to sort through facts and fallacies surrounding the various dog breeds commonly referred to as “Pit Bulls.” It’s not that we hate Phyllis—we love Phyllis—we simply knew she would be most effective (and objective) in her pursuit of the truth about Pitties.

Phyllis teaches AP English at Alma d’ Arte Charter High School, so part of her curriculum focuses on training students to be effectively persuasive, while being able to recognize deceptive rhetoric when they encounter it. So she knows how to wade through emotional arguments to get to the facts. Perfect!

As an added bonus, she told her Alma students all about what she was doing for the magazine—exposing the next generation of young minds to the concept of critical thinking . . . and the importance of spaying or neutering their pets!

9 year-old Nano and Pit puppy Paige (adopted from ASCMV) are just beginning their lives together.



Photo by John Connell Photography

Their tiny newborn eyes and ears are closed, and their little tongues are pink like the bottoms of their teensy paws. Weighing less than a pound, they’re squirmy and soft and cuddly and innocent—and potentially doomed to live desperate lives on cruel chains and die afraid in overcrowded shelters.

They are the first to die. If the Animal Service Center of the Mesilla Valley (ASCMV) is filled to capacity—which is most of the time—and if other shelters refuse to accept the breed—which is also most of the time—and Animal Control rolls up with five “foofy” dogs,” as Paul Richardson, Acting Director of ASCMV, calls the more adoptable breeds, five other dogs must be killed to make space. And they will be the Pit Bulls.

That’s not ASCMV’s callous prejudice—that’s the harsh, horrible reality of a community that continues to breed, but doesn’t always love—and often fears—its Pit Bulls. What is the shelter supposed to do? What would you do?

We can do something—we can research the facts and not settle for opinion or myth, we can spay and neuter our own canine companions, we can set examples of good canine parenting, and we can report abuse.

I’ve interviewed, randomly, as many as 50 Pit Bull owners in researching this story. “Pit Bull” is an umbrella term that includes the American Pit Bull Terrier, the American Staffordshire Terrier, the Staffordshire Bull Terrier, and sometimes includes the American Bulldog and the American Bully—and any mixed-breeds that resemble any of these dogs. Wherever I’ve spied a Pit Bull breed, I’ve asked its owner for a word or two—at the Farmer’s Market, at the Pet Expo, among my friends, and on the street. The one word they all shared—I mean every single one of them—in describing their precious Pitties, was “sweet.”

OK, I have to admit, I hadn’t expected that. Why not? Well, very early in my research, I came across an article on DogsBite.org which claims that Pit Bulls are responsible for more dog bite fatalities than any other breed—65% to be exact—and that “over 900 U.S. cities, all three major military divisions and many housing

by Phyllis Wright

What a Pittie

authorities have adopted policies that target Pit Bulls and other 'dangerous' dog breeds due to the unreasonable risk they pose." That means that some insurance companies won't insure Pit Bull owners, some landlords won't rent to them, and some counties and cities won't allow their citizens to own them. And so began my descent into a maelstrom of contradictions, disputed myths, logical fallacies, and out-of-context data.

Sweet dog or dangerous dog? I couldn't even find a consistent *spelling* of the breed, so source credibility and data consistency became my first priority. For instance, the DogsBite.org Pit Bull fatality numbers are disputed by The National Canine Research Council. NCRC says "the breed of the dog or dogs could not be reliably identified in more than 80% of [fatal] cases [because] news accounts disagreed with each other and/or with animal control reports in a significant number of incidents." Other sources report, too, that media reports of Pit Bull attacks eclipse other canine attacks simply because there are 3-5 million Pit Bulls in the US, and the numbers and breeds are difficult to pin down under an umbrella covering so many mixes.

The National Canine Research Council also "identified a striking co-occurrence of multiple, controllable factors [in bite fatality instances], four or more of which were present in 80.5% of the cases." Each one represents a version of negligence or abuse beyond the dog's control:

- No able-bodied person being present to intervene (87.1%);
- The victim having no familiar relationship with the dog(s) (85.2%);
- The dog(s) owner failing to neuter/spay the dog(s) (84.4%);
- A victim's compromised ability, whether based on age or physical condition, to manage their interactions with the dog(s) (77.4%);
- The owner keeping dog(s) as resident dog(s), rather than as family pet(s) (76.2%);
- The owner's prior mismanagement of the dog(s) (37.5%);
- The owner's abuse or neglect of dog(s) (21.1%).

The context here suggests an aggregate image

of unneutered, unsupervised, unloved "resident" dogs that never see the inside of a loving home—and the conclusion the Research Council draws is that "The co-occurring factors are potentially preventable."

Animal cruelty is always preventable.

The Dog Whisperer's Emmy-nominated Cesar Millan, in *Why I Love Pit Bulls*, says "we don't have a problem with the breed — we have a problem with education. And until we change people's attitudes, Pit Bulls are going to have problems. There are more Pit Bulls in shelters than any other breed, they're less likely to be adopted, and they're far more likely to be euthanized."

We're right where we started—too many Pit Bulls in our shelter.

The ASCMV's Paul Richardson, says, wryly, "you can walk down any street in town and count 10 Pit Bulls." He says "we have to do better," and asks the community to "stop breeding" and setting the dogs up for failure. He suggests that some people are afraid to adopt Pit mixes—even though he promises that "[any animal] available for adoption at the shelter *has* to be friendly." Other shelters are often equally stalwart in refusing Pit Bull mixes, so when the ASCMV sends 20 adoptable dogs elsewhere to find forever homes, it's likely as few as two of them will be Pits.

Paul says that "our hearts fall when we hear the [shelter] gate beep (indicating that Animal Control is arriving with more dogs) because we will have to make space." Pit Bull mixes represent 21% of the ASCMV's intake—almost 40% more than the next breed, Chihuahuas. Almost **triple** the number of Pits are euthanatized than any other breed, even though "everyone at ASCMV loves Pits."

In their 2016 Annual Report, ASCMV's good news is that "our community's euthanasia rate has dropped over 75% in the last 9 years," but their intake still means that the per capita euthanasia rate for Doña Ana County is 4.61 animals per every 100 people in the county. That's heart-breaking, especially given that the shelter offers affordable sterilization surgeries that would signifi-

cantly reduce the underlying problem. 1,737 last year alone.

According to BarkPost Stories, 1.2 million dogs are euthanized annually, approximately 40% (nearly half a million) of which are Pit Bulls. Why don't we adopt some of these puppies?

Adopt a Pet.com says "before adopting a Pit Bull type dog, people should know that there are no special behaviors that make Pit Bulls different from other dogs." Their jaws do *not* lock, for example. "Their behavior is *canine* behavior." As with other breeds, Pit Bulls have vastly different personalities. "Some are couch potatoes, while others are sleek athletes. Some are party-hardies, while others prefer a quiet life with just their special people."

How tragic that so many Pitties don't have those special people in their lives. Too often they lack critical socialization—a basic training fundamental—but, frequently, they're never actually trained. They're used for fighting or bait or for profit or as cut-rate burglar alarms. They're chained, ignored, beaten, and starved. And when they get old, ill, or inconvenient, they're dropped at the



They are the first to die.

When did
Pitties
become the
bad guys?



The DogCruces Pet Expo
was swarming with
well-behaved Pitties and
their humans, including Ajax
and Danielle Kleist.

Photo by John Connell Photography

shelter, or abandoned in the desert—like one I rescued that had been tied to a pile of trash and left to die in the Doña Ana Mountains.

The Animal Control Officers who rescue and intervene for these lost souls offer a professional perspective. Officer Carl Kerrs from Doña Ana County Animal Control (DACAC) says that people are intimidated by stray Pit Bulls because of their reputation, though he's "met some of the sweetest Pitts." Officer Ann Vander Vliet from Las Cruces Animal Control confirms that "Pitts are no different in terms of aggression," and her fellow Officer Megan Telles, says that "if we get an 'aggressive dog' call, we hope it is a Pit, because it's probably been called out as aggressive just because it's a Pit." People sometimes panic when they see a stray Pit and assume it's aggressive without waiting to see any actual aggressive behavior. Officer Vander Vliet adds that even under duress, Pit Bulls are easy to calm, with "sweet nothings and food." Officer Telles, who tellingly owns five Pitts herself, reminds us that "a dog's a dog at the end of the day." Officer Jason Cantrell of DACAC echoes that perspective and adds that "the environment they live in changes them, and the media portrays them as evil. Often, when we have a call for a 'vicious' Pit Bull, the dog comes right over and licks my hand." Officer Jesus Fraire, also with DACAC, cinches the issue with his observation that "If you tie them, leave them, give them no attention, if they've never interacted with a human, the dog is bound to react—no matter what breed."

In fact, The American Temperament Test Society (ATTS) has tested over 200 breeds and 33,925 dogs since 1977. The average pass rate, across all breeds, is 83.4%. The American Pit Bull Terrier has a pass rate of 87.45%. The Staffordshire Bull Terrier has a 91.2% pass rate, and the other Pit Bull types that were tested all scored above 85%, in samples of almost 2000 subjects. Very high scores, indeed.

ATTS makes it clear that "the pass-fail rate is not a measure of a breed's aggression, but rather of each dog's ability to interact with humans, human situations, and the environment"—

the very behaviors in which we're interested. The Temperament Test "focuses on and measures different aspects of temperament such as stability, shyness, aggressiveness, and friendliness as well as the dog's instinct for protectiveness towards its handler and/or self-preservation in the face of a threat."

So, what about this "instinct for protectiveness?" In my interviews, the adjective I heard most often, after "sweet," was "loyal," and this may be significant to all the implicit contradictions. Pit Bulls are very likely to be very loyal to their owners—sometimes even to the point of defensiveness—even if their owners have abused them. One person I interviewed described an occasion where her Pit put himself between her and a potential threat. Did the dog become mindlessly aggressive? No—because he does not have aggressive owners.

According to Petfinder.com, "Unless a Pit Bull has been poorly bred or purposefully trained to attack humans, they generally love people. They are, in fact, one of the most loving, loyal, friendly and dedicated companions you can have." **Let me repeat: "Unless he has been purposefully trained. . . ."**

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Chief Veterinarian, Mark Evans has said: "Staffies (Staffordshire Bull Terriers) have had a terrible press, but this is not of their own making—in fact, they're wonderful dogs. If people think that Staffies have problems, they're looking at the wrong end of the dog lead! When well cared for and properly trained, they can make brilliant companions. Our experience suggests that problems occur when bad owners exploit the Staffie's desire to please by training them to show aggression."

Pit Bulls are the breed of choice for dog fights, and according to BarkPost, one of the reasons is that "Pit Bulls have been bred specifically not to redirect their aggression toward their human handlers. This is incredibly important because dog fighters, as a part of the blood sport, will have to stick their hands in the fight, grab their dog, and pull him or her out."

Ironically, "their loyalty and desire to please make them 'good' fighting dogs, and yet it's that association with dog fighting that's largely responsible for the bad rap that they get," according to BarkPost.com. "In a 2014 literature review of dog bite studies, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) states that breed is a poor sole

Pit Bulls would do calculus
to please their owners.



Obviously, there's a trend here. Owner. Training. Owner. Training.

predictor of dog bites. Controlled studies do not show Pit Bulls to be disproportionately dangerous. While Pit Bull-type dogs are more frequently identified with cases involving very severe injuries or fatalities than other breeds, the review suggests this may relate to the popularity of the breed."

Why are they so popular? Well, there are the obvious brutal reasons, but there are loving reasons, too, as shared by all with whom I've spoken....

Ajax, a Pit-Shepherd mix, great, great grandson of Pit Bull Zeus, "loves children." Aaron Josh Marquez describes the way his young son would climb all over Ajax, and true to the dog's mythical namesake, Ajax "moved in a way" that would prevent the tiny boy from falling.

Jamie Jones' Lola, "the sweetest dog you've ever met," is a Therapaws canine who has comforted as many as 200 people with her calm and sensitive demeanor.

Ray Kleitz's dog Spot, a "sweet as can be" Pitipoint, (Pitbull/English Pointer Mix) is "super friendly." Spot is in training to be a therapy dog, and his trainer calls him a "butterflies and rainbows dog."

Claren Wilson, Head Trainer at Could K-9 told me that "Pit Bulls would do calculus to please their owners." Then she added, "I haven't met a Pit Bull I haven't liked or that hasn't liked me."

Joe Carrera introduced me to Gia, his Blue Pit, and suggested "if you want to be involved with your dog, get a Pit Bull." He says they *need* human interaction. Gia is 20 months old, and Joe has never even heard her growl.

Teri Gonzales didn't expect to love her Pit Bull, Cano, so very much. She calls him her "street puppy" because Mayor Vic found him in the street and asked if she'd foster him until he found a good home. He had. Cano joined the family's Blue Pit, Kelba, and seems to think he has a bit of feline in him, loving to stretch his 75 pounds across the back of the family room couch.

And it's common knowledge here at *DogCruces* that our own Charissa Paskowski favors her precious American Staffordshire mix, Nacho, over any human being on the planet.

This all jibes with our memories of famous Pit Bull mascots, like *Pete the Pup* from the *Little Rascals*, Tige from Buster Brown shoe advertisements, and RCA/Victor's famous *Nipper*.

Dr. Ian Dunbar, almost always pictured with his beautiful American Bulldog, is a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the

International Society for Applied Ethology, the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, the California Veterinary Medical Association, the Sierra Veterinary Medical Association, and the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (which he founded). Dr. Dunbar writes of Pit Bulls "with a good owner, you have the most fantastic breed of all."

Obviously, there's a trend here. Owner. Training. Owner. Training.

Michele Meunier, Founder and Executive Director of our local ACTion Programs for Animals (APA) offers a decisive perspective—Pit Bull mixes are big, strong athletic dogs, about which there is "nothing different," except that "they're a dime a dozen" and may find their way into abusive homes and situations. Because they look the part. Because no one else wants them. Because we have not stopped breeding them despite knowing how tragically the pattern hurts so many dogs. APA's "No-Kill" Community has saved 3,000 animals since 2012, and 1,000 of them have been Pit Bull mixes. Michele and APA believe in and are dedicated to the well-being of Pit Bull breeds.

W. Handel, German Police Dog Trainer, in his article, "The Psychological Basis of Temperament Testing," defines temperament as "the sum total of all inborn and acquired physical and mental traits and talents which determines, forms and regulates behavior in the environment."

This article relies heavily on research in its attempt to address those frequently-muddled "inborn and acquired traits" in Pit Bull temperament—and the fact-checking has been nothing short of crazy. As I've implied, I couldn't confirm many "known facts," trust the credibility of some sources, or find empirical evidence for any number of the so-called myths. I waded through generalities, name-calling, appeals to fear, and some very solid research by very credible experts. The take-away from all of it is the imperative of doing your own research—and soul-search—before you adopt *any* breed. Ask experts, ask friends, ask your vet, and ask yourself what you expect. And then, be the very best companion your dog could possibly want.

Your Pit Bull puppy, like all puppies, will need consistent socialization, praise, exercise, neutering, chipping, heart worm meds, rules, reinforcement, and *lots* of love.

What it *doesn't* need are spikes on its collar, weighty chains, and only haphazard human contact. It doesn't need to be tangled around trees, choking on its outgrown collar. It doesn't need to be making more Pit Bulls and watching its puppies

die of starvation and heat; or fall, terrified, into the hands of strangers who will perpetuate the misery.

Enough.

Let's all do what we can—donate, adopt, spay, neuter, and love, treasure, and respect our precious pets. We are their only windows to the world—either a world of "butterflies and rainbows" or a Dantean nightmare of neglect.

Paul McCartney of the Beatles says that "you can judge a man's true character by the way he treats his fellow animals." Please hear the music. "All we are saying, is give Pits a chance."

Phyllis Wright is Contributing Editor for *DogCruces Magazine*. Her fellow editors owe her lunch for tackling this article.

11 SIGNS OF ANIMAL ABUSE, NEGLECT OR CRUELTY

- 1 Poor body condition and noticeable trauma.
- 2 Lack of food or water.
- 3 Lack of shelter.
- 4 Lack of sanitation.
- 5 Abandonment: It's a crime in all 50 states to abandon an animal.
- 6 The animal is tied or caged.
- 7 There are chains or padlocks around or embedded into the animal's neck: A chained animal is an abused animal.
- 8 The animal shows evidence of being trained for or having been used to fight.
- 9 The animal's behavior is far from normal: It may be very aggressive or severely shy (e.g., cowering, hiding, fear-biting), even with—or especially with—its owner.
- 10 There are too many animals living on one property.
- 11 An owner being overtly violent against the animal, striking or otherwise physically abusing it.

Source: *The Wet Nose Blog*



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Doggone Doggerel: Bad Bark, Worse Bite?

It sometimes is said, of a dog people dread,
That his bark is much worse than his bite.
But never accuse, unless you have news
That the canine has been impolite.

by
Ruff Barkhard

Consider the groans when the public bemoans
Random woofs, they complain, that offend.
Blaming the hound is simply low-down;
Do not denigrate man's best friend!

Ask yourself this — is something amiss
When Rover emits a loud yelp?
This guttural gesture is part of his nature —
Perhaps he's just asking for help.

So let mutts be mutts, no ifs, ands, or buts,
Let them bark, be it nighttime or day.
That unsought symphony — the cur's barking glee —
May means the dog just wants to play.



PETS of Dog 'Cruces



Please send photos of your favorite pets to:
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DogCruces • Fall 2017

Workin' Like a Dog



Fostering a Parvo Pup

As volunteers involved in rescuing animals for eight years, Jamie and her husband Jason have had their fair share of foster dogs. Around the fourth of July this year, Jamie got a call from a rescue contact who had found a four-month old puppy near her house. Since this person was in the process of moving, she called Jamie, who fosters for Forever Homes Animal Rescue (FHAR). The couple agreed to take in the puppy, and they named her *Tazo*.

Whenever a person agrees to foster for a rescue group there is always the chance of receiving a sick dog, which is why these groups usually take precautions before

placing them in homes. Illnesses can take up to 14 days for symptoms to appear, so FHAR has a two-week quarantine protocol prior to transporting any animals. By bypassing the group in this special case, Jamie knew she was taking on additional risk.

Tazo appeared healthy on the first day, but she did not eat. This could have been due to stress, and was not necessarily unusual behavior for a pup that finds itself in a new situation. However, she still refused to eat on the second day—not even the hamburger meat that was offered—and she also had an upset stomach. At this point Jamie began to

suspect it was more serious than simply stress. Loss of appetite and diarrhea in a young puppy are usually due to one of two things—parvo or giardia. They went straight to their vet for testing and, unfortunately, the parvo test came back positive.

Canine parvovirus is a highly contagious and often fatal viral disease which is rampant in our area. Other symptoms include fever, lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea, and severe dehydration. The disease acts quickly, so *Tazo* began treatment at the vet's office immediately. Jamie and Jason would know in a few days if the little pup would survive. Please keep in mind—there is no cure for parvo. Rather, treatment addresses the secondary infections and dehydration.

The medical regimen for *Tazo* included doxycycline, anti-nausea medicine, metronidazole and IV Fluids. Since the poor puppy refused to eat, she had to be force-fed with a syringe—a diet of goat's milk, baby food and Pedialite. In addition, since hydration is key to combating parvo, *Tazo* required IV fluids as much as possible. After five days of intensive care, *Tazo* survived the ordeal!

Once *Tazo* began eating and acting like a normal active puppy again, Jaime and Jason discovered their involvement with the disease was far from

over. They could not take *Tazo* out in public, or have her interact with any other dogs, for another 14 days because she could still be contagious. Additionally, parvovirus can live in the soil for up to two years and can only be eradicated completely with a bleach solution—or fire. So Jamie and Jason decided to take no chances and burned the grass portion of their yard. They cleaned the entire

inside of their home with bleach, including all doggie bedding, food bowls and animal crates. To insure they wouldn't spread the virus, the couple had to wash their hands and spray the bottoms of their shoes with a bleach solution when leaving the house.

As an extra measure, they also soaked their walkway with bleach. Even after taking all these proper precautionary steps, Jamie and Jason will not be able to have an immunocompromised dog or young puppy in their house for a minimum of six months.

Tazo's story has a happy ending—but not all dogs are so lucky. *Tazo* probably would have succumbed to the disease if her symptoms had not been recognized and she had not received timely veterinary attention. If *Tazo* had been vaccinated, she would not have had to suffer through this ordeal. It is crucially important that puppies be fully vaccinated prior to going out in public and that all pets receive routine inoculations throughout their lives.

The anti-vaccination movement is beginning to spread to pet owners, and this is a cause for concern. Individuals who work at shelters and rescue facilities know how dangerous it can be not to have pets vaccinated. Too often, serious diseases can start with a mild cough or small nasal congestion which turn into something severe and can result in a pet's death. An unvaccinated pet is at high risk of contracting and spreading viruses. Just as with human viruses and diseases, contracting and/or spreading canine contagions is frighteningly easy to do.

Jamie Jones is an outreach coordinator and foster parent for Forever Homes Animal Rescue (FHAR). FHAR focuses on transporting adoptable rescue dogs out of southern New Mexico.

***Tazo* was parvo-positive when she was rescued. Luckily, her foster parents recognized something was wrong and acted quickly to save the precious puppy's life!**



Too often, serious diseases can start with a mild cough or small nasal congestion which turn into something severe and can result in a pet's death. An unvaccinated pet is at high risk of contracting and spreading viruses.



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Through sheer will and determination, ACTION Programs for Animals is saving shelter animals and helping people care for their pets.

ACTION Programs for Animals (APA) was founded in 2009 by Las Cruces Michel Meunier, Jean Gilbert and Julie Miller, who advocate the City and County adopt a "no kill" policy at our municipal shelter, the Animal Service Center of the Mesilla Valley (ASCMV). This trio were the first three board members for the group.

APA's sponsor and founder, Michel Meunier, was an early No Kill advocate, and many thought her mad back then (in 2005/2006). At first, she volunteered and worked within other local animal organizations. Then the three women tried to start APA as a community coalition. But, at that time, they encountered more resistance to than acceptance of their proposals.

Frustrated with trying to convince others that No Kill philosophies, programs and services were the way to start making a difference in our community, the trio decided to take action and start *demonstrating* what these ideas and services could do. The group and their efforts started slowly, but surely. During the early years, APA operated on a budget of less than \$10,000 a year, which has now grown—through fundraising efforts and grants—to a yearly budget of more than \$150,000. It's still, essentially, a shoe-string budget given the scope of their services, with most of these funds going toward veterinary costs.

A pet food bank was the first program APA launched, and it's still going strong today. The food bank distributes an average of 10,000 pounds of pet food every month to Las Cruces families in need—totalling thousands of pounds of food and other supplies over the years. Participating families and individuals must be responsible guardians to their animals—and this has resulted in the bonus effect of urging many to vaccinate and spay/neuter their animals. APA also shares resources with the both the *human* food bank (Casa de Peregrinos) and the City's Meals-on-Wheels program whose participants need food for their dogs and cats. Other rescue groups also benefit when surplus or special donations are received.

From 2009-2012, the pet food bank and community outreach dominated APA's efforts. Then, after attending a No Kill conference in Albuquerque, APA began recruiting other like-minded Las Cruces who were willing to become a network of foster homes for shelter animals. This breakthrough led to APA forming a partnership with ASCMV, in which adoptable animals are taken out of the shelter and placed in foster care rather than joining the ranks of those in line to be euthanized. APA has saved 500-700 animals from the shelter each year since 2012, which totals more than 3000 to date!

The group began their direct rescue efforts shortly thereafter, expanding their foster network and running offsite adoptions as often as possible. They also began adding other services into the mix, including offering regular low-cost vaccination clinics. To date, APA has administered thousands of vaccines—and microchips—to the community. They continue to hold low-cost clinics whenever possible, especially for microchips.

In 2016, APA opened their own adoption and education center. The building is located at 800 W. Picacho Avenue in Las Cruces, and it has helped the group increase the number of animals they are able to rescue—especially cats and kittens. Kittens, cats, and large dogs that are ready to be adopted are housed there 24/7, thanks to the volunteers who care for the animals. The adoption center is open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 to 4, Saturday from 11 to 2, and also by appointment.

APA has taken a leadership role in the Save-a-Kitten project, rescuing hundreds of cats and kittens each year. They

treat every feline afflicted with ringworm or other illnesses until they're ready for adoption or transport out of the area (which is happening more often now, thanks to support from and networking with other rescue groups).

In 2017, APA took over operation of the P.A.W.S. (Prisoners and Animals Working Toward Success) program, in partnership with the Southern New Mexico Correctional Facility. They hope to expand P.A.W.S. to include another prison soon. APA is proud of this program and the way in which it helps both humans and canines in need.

APA still functions as a primarily all-volunteer organization, but the group is ready to take the next steps toward progress and growth. Their volunteers, board members, and funds have grown every year, but more is needed for the next phase of growth. The group is now actively seeking to move to a different property (with at least double the space they have now) so they can continue to expand the number of animals and people served through their programs. They are happy to receive any assistance possible in doing this and would like to remain in as central a location in Las Cruces as possible. They hope to have a big enough place to share more in the networking and rescue efforts of *all* the local animal groups, and they envision this new location as a hub of activity and support for all.

For more about APA, visit their website and Facebook page, give them a call, or send an e-mail.

www.actionprogramsforanimals.org
www.facebook.com/APALasCruces
mail@apalascruces.org
575-571-4654 (adoption center)
575-644-0505 (info line, leave a message)

Michel Meunier is Founder and Executive Director of ACTION Programs for Animals.



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Celebrating Pit Bull Awareness Month and the loving, peaceful nature of all DOGS.

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PITS FOR PEACE

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APA's annual Pits for Peace & Pizza Fest is scheduled for Sunday, October 22 at the Grapevine Plaza Event Center (home of Picacho Peak Brewing Company on West Picacho Avenue).



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DogCruces

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Penny Loves Nacho

I lived in Brooklyn when I saw my first-ever local news broadcast about a vicious attack involving a breed of dog I'd never heard of—a Pit Bull. According to the report, these dogs were bred to be super-soldiers—innately brutal, shockingly aggressive, with jaws that *locked* once fastened onto their victims. And they had developed a taste for human flesh!

OK, I made that last part up, but you get the picture. Thereafter, barely a night went by without another terrifying story about this demon breed, and it wasn't long before no sane person could understand why these dogs weren't summarily rounded up and put to death for the benefit of all mankind.

So this had been my only exposure to Pits when I moved to Las Cruces several years later, and I was shocked to meet seemingly-rational people who admitted to owning—and loving—Pit Bulls. I was introduced to a few of these dogs, briefly, and they didn't seem as bloodthirsty as I'd been led to believe. Still...I kept a wary distance, just in case.

This all changed when Charissa brought a precious bundle of Pittie love to the office one day almost a decade ago. He was about the size of a man's shoe and smelled of puppy breath. She had just rescued him from a situation in which he was tied up all day on concrete, given leftover burritos to eat, and had only intermittent human contact and no other dogs to play with. Just within this past year, an x-ray revealed he still had two pellets lodged in his body from where he'd been shot.

Nacho became a part of our family at work, and he single-handedly obliterated my prejudice toward Pitties. We all love him. Sooo much. But nobody loves Nacho as much as my Penny does.

She was tiny when they first met, and would wind in and out and around and under Nacho's legs in an attempt to impress and woo him. It did not work. He was far too cool to pay attention to the annoying little girl who worshipped him.

But Nacho's indifference has never mattered to Penny, and her devotion to him has never faded. Even though she sees him several times a week, she greets him with the enthusiasm of a teeny-bopper meeting her idol for the very first time.



Nacho does not always appreciate the onslaught of affection.

And she dances for him.

Oh, how she dances! Her back half wiggles side to side, her front half dips up and down, and her head rolls around and around and around. That's right—my little girl dances like *Seinfeld's* Elaine, and I don't even care. It's such a genuine expression of pure doggie joy that it makes my heart happy whenever I get to see the Penny Dance in all its awkward glory.

Penny doesn't chase rabbits when she sleeps; there is no whimpering or yelping, and her paws don't twitch. Instead, her little pink tongue sticks out ever so slightly, and she licks the air as if very thirsty or enjoying a poochie cone at Caliche's. I thought this odd—and it took me a while to figure it out—but I'm almost certain she's dreaming of Nacho.

When awake and in Nacho's presence, Penny employs three distinct strategies for expressing her love. The first is her shy girl act. She whines and dances in place, occasionally approaching him without ever actually making physical contact, then backing away. In the second scenario, she just goes for it in an all-out assault of affection from which Nacho cannot escape quickly enough behind the safe glass barrier of his mom's office door. The third is my favorite. She begins as the shy girl, then runs right at him, slowing down just enough to hit him with a few good, sloppy kisses before speeding away, victorious. We refer to these as "drive-by kisses." Part of me wishes she would show a little dignity from time to time, but that ship sailed long ago.

I get it. Nacho's a good-looking, older boy with a Pit Bull rep who barely acknowledges her existence. He is irresistible. As Penny's mom, I suppose I could be sternly disapproving of her life choices. A Pittie boy?!! He's no good for you—go to your room!

But despite starting life on a chain, despite being neglected and isolated, despite being shot at least twice, Nacho is hardly bad-to-the-bone. Spoiled-to-the-bone, maybe, but there's nothing bad in him. Somehow, his heart of gold never turned dark, and he's always been more than worthy of Penny's—and everybody's—adoration.

Just don't tell her I said so.

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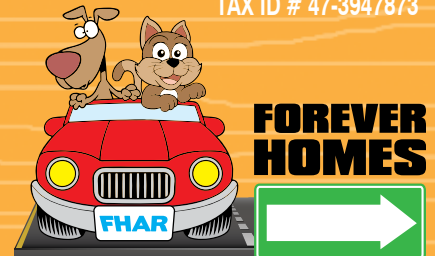
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Walter's Lunchbox

by Walter Dubbin
(as told to Margaret Dubbin)



Lending a Paw

Hey there, Peeps! Hard to believe summer is already over and the mornings are starting to get cooler. *Butthead* and I had a PAW-some summer! We got to do a bunch of camping, hiking, and just chillaxing among the tall pines. Over the July 4th holiday, Mom and Dad took us up to Rio Costillo Park, in Northern New Mexico, for five whole days of camping, hiking, and trout fishing! We had never been there before but quickly discovered it was a very nice, well kept, and dog-friendly campground. The camp sites are well spread out, so everyone has plenty of elbow room, and there are nearly a dozen mountain lakes and hundreds of streams for trout fishing! The fishing was great—Mom and Dad (well, mostly Dad) caught enough trout for all four of us to enjoy a trout dinner every evening! *Butthead* and I each got to devour our very own fish with our kibble. It was absolute heaven!!!

Unfortunately, the summer was far less heavenly for hundreds of thousands of pets lost or abandoned as a result of this year's natural disasters. Mom told me the horrible news of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma and also of the fires up north started by some punk kids. I can't begin to imagine the fear those displaced pups are experiencing. Not to mention being wet and hungry—my two worst nightmares (after being separated from Mom)! I know that *Butthead* and I have it made. I know we are safe and warm and well-fed here at home with Mom and Dad. But as Mom was telling me about these tragic floods, I could see in her face that she needed to at least try to do something to help.

While Hurricane Harvey was causing historic flooding in Houston, I watched from my comfortable bed in Mom's office as she struggled between wanting to fulfill her adult responsibilities at work and following her heart to help the victims in some small way. As the week went on and the tragedy grew exponentially, I watched her inner struggle become more difficult until finally she said "screw it" and decided she was going to Houston.

Mom invited my Auntie Renee to join her on this trek, and they announced their mission on Facebook—to deliver much-needed food and supplies to the four-legged victims of Hurricane Harvey. In less than 10 hours, through the power of social media and you PAWSOME, pet-loving peeps, they were able to collect over 2000 lbs of dog and cat food, blankets, towels, collars, leashes, 72 cases of bottled water, other miscellaneous people supplies, and \$750 in cash donations!

Butthead and I were overwhelmed watching the

donations being dropped off at the office—by friends and strangers alike! Mom told us that when she and my bud, Mr. Andre, were picking up a pallet of dog food she purchased from Sam's Club a gentleman they had never met before heard of their mission and donated several cases of bottled water right then and there! Miss Charissa, my pal Nacho's Mom, brought donations and stayed to help with the effort. By the end of the day there was too much donated stuff to fit in Mom's work truck—so they rented a trailer to carry it all!

Mom said that while she feels there is still more to do, she hopes that this small effort made a big difference to at least one displaced or abandoned pup.

Campfire Grilled Trout with Ginger

1 Fresh Caught Trout
(whole fish, gutted & cleaned)
1 Tsp Freshly Grated Ginger
1 Tsp Olive Oil • 1 Sprig Thyme



Get the campfire going early. Tear off a large square of foil and drizzle olive oil over the center. Rub the cavity of the fish with olive oil and grated ginger, add sprig of thyme. Place fish in the center of oiled foil and wrap up. Put foil-wrapped fish on grill set 2-3" over hot coals. Cook 3-5 min each side or until fish is cooked through. Allow to cool, remove fish head, skin and bones (if desired) and serve over rice or kibble.

Fall Harvest Biscuits

4C Brown Rice Flour
1C Flax Seed Meal • 4 Eggs
4Tbsp Dry Milk Powder
1C Fall Harvest Puree

1 Apple (cored & diced)
2C Diced Carrots
2C Butternut Squash (peeled, seeded, & diced)



Place apple, squash, and carrots in the Instant Pot or electric pressure cooker with 1 C water. Close lid and turn vent to "seal." Set cooker at "Hi Pressure" for 15 min. While veggies are cooking, preheat oven to 375°F. Once pressure cooker is done, allow 10 min of natural release then quick-release remaining pressure. Drain excess water from veggies, allow to cool to room temperature, and puree. Combine dry ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Add eggs and puree to dry ingredients and mix until it forms a stiff dough. Knead dough until ingredients are thoroughly distributed. Divide dough and roll out sections to 1/4" thickness, between pieces of parchment paper. Cut out shapes and place onto parchment-lined cookie sheets. Bake 30-45 minutes or until center of cookie is firm. Leaving cookies in the oven, turn off oven and allow to completely cool.



DogCruces • Fall 2017

NOTE: ALWAYS consult with your veterinarian regarding ingredients, serving sizes, and special dietary requirements prior to changing your pet's diet.



Kat's Korner by Kat Lacy

Preparing for CATastrophe

The recent hurricanes that hit the Gulf Coast and Caribbean should inspire us all to take steps to prepare for emergencies that could strike closer to home. Here in Southern New Mexico we are extremely blessed with great weather, for the most part. We never experience natural disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes (at least big ones), devastating tornadoes, landslides, etc. We do see heavy rains and flash flooding sometimes, but never (so far) to the extreme of thousands of people being displaced. So why bother to prepare? Because you NEVER know. Emergencies can happen here. Even a power outage could seriously affect our safety, and our pets—including our cats—are extremely vulnerable. An emergency plan of action that you prepare, in writing, and review with your entire family is just plain smart. Let's go over some basic ideas for emergency preparedness with your pets in mind—cats in particular.

If you don't have a crate for your cat, get one now! Make sure the crate is big enough for your cat to be able to turn around easily and remain comfortable for an extended time. If kitty's belly gets stuck trying to get through the door, dragging the crate with him—it's too small! Crates with a top-loading feature are VERY handy. It is much easier to remove a stressed cat from a top-loader rather than reaching in (risking possible bites and scratches) to extract him via the front door.

Long before an emergency strikes, you need to make sure your cat is comfortable with his crate. Place the crate on the ground, and leave it there with a comfy bed and food or treats inside. Your cat's natural curiosity will compel him to check it out and even lounge in the crate. You can train kitty to go into the crate for treats, then slowly start picking up the crate and closing the door, working towards short car rides, etc.

Make two emergency first aid kits. Keep one in your car and one in your house (a third one at your workplace is not a bad idea, either). Mark a day on your calendar once per year when you update and review the kit's contents so items don't go bad or get damaged over time. Add some herbal calmers to your kits, such as *Happy Traveler* and *Emergency Rescue* (we carry calming formulas at Better Life). Each works differently on different cats, so try a variety—in advance.

Prepare a travel pack for your cats that includes a small litter box and litter, some travel bowls,

and a container of water that will last your at least a week. Pack travel food, such as freeze-dried Sojos, that lasts a long time (easily three years!) in storage. Also, vacuum seal packs of kitty's regular food and place these with enough canned food to last at least a week. Pack all this food in an insulated cooler bag near your door so that it is easy to grab. I would add a good-fitting harness and leashes to your stockpile, as well. Cats bolt when in stressful situations, so getting them used to a harness and leash may save their lives. Finally, some baby wipes, micro-fiber towels and small trash bags prove handy for almost any situation.

After preparing all of this fun stuff, you need to make an emergency evacuation map—a real paper map of your immediate surroundings and beyond. Our cell phones will likely *not* work in an emergency, so don't plan to rely on them. Prepare as if you *don't* have one, just in case (although those solar-powered battery pack phone chargers are pretty nifty). Map several detailed routes to a safer area. Your family should know in advance where your meeting places—both primary and backup—are. Let the people at your safe destination know in advance that you are traveling with pets. Surprising relatives can result in a whole new type of emergency!

All joking aside, the most important part of planning for emergencies is to prepare yourself mentally. Stay calm, and make sure your emergency preparedness plan is solid. You cannot help others—let alone your pets—if you don't take care of yourself first. The better prepared you are, the better your chances of survival. When you know in advance what to do in an emergency, you are better equipped to stay calm and in control. Don't forget to microchip your pets and keep the contact information up-to-date. Keep a written list of emergency contacts for yourself, as well. It's amazing how many phone numbers we don't know anymore because we rely on our cell phones to keep track for us!

There are plenty of other emergency preparedness ideas not included in this short article. Do some research, and design your plan to fit your family and pets. Pick a day when you can focus on gathering all your things with your family. Then at least once a year plan a day to review and reload.

Kat Lacy is owner of Better Life Natural Pet Foods.



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