

Winter 2018

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# Dog Cruces

Information for the Las Cruces Dog Lover!

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Canine and human officers of LCPD's K-9 Unit serve as elite crime-fighting teams — as well as good-will ambassadors in the community

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### Does FidoCare Make Sense for Your Pooch?

Pet Insurance is gaining popularity, which means more choices for pet parents considering health insurance for *Fido* and *Fluffy*

Page 23

### Aggie-tastic!

Striking the Wonder Dog and thousands of Las Cruces (and Dog'Cruces) traveled to Tucson to be a part of NMSU's historic victory

PLUS . . . Little Lumps Can Mean Big Trouble . . . Keeping Kitty Trim . . . Dog Libs! . . . A Belated Bah Humbug . . . and More!

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# Happy Year of the Dog!

**T**hat's a right, Dog'Cruces, 2018 is officially our year—the Year of the Dog in the Chinese Zodiac calendar. Woo-hoo! Or better yet...Arf Arf! Of course, I like to think every year is the Year of the Dog for those of us who have furry, four-legged family members whose unconditional love brightens our lives 24/7/365.

Long-time readers may remember that our second-ever issue (Fall 2011) featured a cover story about the K-9 units of the Las Cruces Police Department, Doña Ana County Sheriff's Office and the NMSU Campus Police Department. Seeing the officers and their dogs in action was such a great experience back then that Phyllis and I have been looking forward to an opportunity to do it again ever since. So we could hardly contain our excitement when we got to ride along with LCPD K-9 officers for this issue's cover story. Phyllis had so much fun I think she would be happy if we wrote about the police every issue! It's a whole new group of officers and dogs, but some things haven't changed—namely, that Officer Josh Savage (no longer with the K-9 unit) still gets razzed about being our cover model all those years ago, and has copies of the magazine show up mysteriously in his locker from time to time.

The whole city was rooting for the Aggies in the Arizona Bowl, and I was there on the sidelines with my buddy Steve and NMSU's *Striking the Wonder Dog*, whose college bowl debut featured five tee retrievals—one after each Aggie score. It was a great road trip to Tucson, and you can read all about it in my "Traveling With Your Best Friends" column on page 23.

Steve and I and our Mesilla Valley Search and Rescue teammate, Kirk, took our dogs on

another, less festive, road trip to the Texas State University Body Farm in San Marcos. *Wave*, *Scout* and *Dot* have been training in Human Remains Detection (HRD), and this was a rare and tremendous opportunity to learn a whole lot very quickly. Steve wrote about our experience there in our "Working Like a Dog" section on page 19.

I want to take most of my space this issue to acknowledge and thank all the people who make *Dog'Cruces* possible. Our columnists and other guest writers contribute their time, talent, and knowledge to provide the content that informs, entertains and—hopefully—compels you to pick up each and every issue of the magazine. A very special thank you to our regulars...Phyllis, Margaret, Kat, Dr. Pirtle—and even Jess—for coming through every single time. Remember, they do so simply out of the goodness of their hearts...they receive no pay for their efforts.

You might think that, because we publish quarterly, we only work four months out of the year—but nothing could be further from the truth! The *Dog'Cruces* staff is almost always working to keep things going behind the scenes. Our Facebook page has truly become a central hub for community events and lost/found pets and, thanks to Animal Control Officers, has helped reunite many lost pets with their owners this past year.

**We couldn't do any of this without the support of local businesses.** You may have noticed that about half the ads in the magazine feature volunteer organizations that serve our community in an effort to make life better for both the animals and the people of Doña Ana County. We build their ads and donate the space

in the magazine so they can reach potential volunteers, patrons and people in need of their help. *So the other half of our advertisers—our local small businesses—actually foot the bill for the entire magazine!* And they do so gladly, in full support of the animal organizations that play such an important role in our community. **So please, "Shop Local" throughout the year and keep your hard-earned dollars in our area, so our locally-owned businesses can continue to grow and thrive and reinvest in Las Cruces!**

And, finally, there would be no *Dog'Cruces* at all without you, our readers, who faithfully pick up this magazine every quarter and help spread the love and joy we all share for our pets. We appreciate your support more than I can express, and we will do everything we can to live up to your expectations with every issue.

I hope your Year of the Dog has gotten off to a fantastic start, and that it continues to be a very special year for you and your family. We hope to be a regular part of this, and every, year to come.

## Vic Villalobos

Mayor of Dog'Cruces

Write to us at:

**Dog'Cruces Magazine**  
151 S. Solano, Suite E  
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Dog'Cruces ❀ Winter 2018





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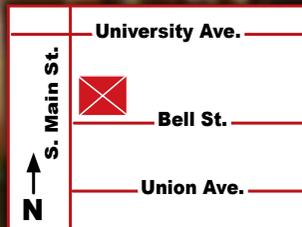
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# Doggie

## JANUARY 2018

*National Train Your Dog Month  
and Walk Your Pet Month*

### Saturday, January 20th

*ASCMV Three Off-Site  
Adoption Events*

PetCo, 3050 E. Lohman Bldg D, from 11am-3pm. Downtown Farmer's Market, from 9am-1pm, and Natural Grocers, 3970 E. Lohman, from 11am-3pm. For more information, call 575-382-0018.

### Sunday, January 21st

*ASCMV Barkin' Brunch Off-Site  
Pet Adoption Event*

Cracker Barrel, 1490 Hickory Rd., from 9am-1pm. For information, call 575-382-0018.

### Saturday, January 27th

*ASCMV Three Off-Site  
Adoption Events*

PetCo, 3050 E. Lohman Bldg D, from 11am-3pm. Downtown Farmer's Market, from 9am-1pm, and Natural Grocers, 3970 E. Lohman, from 11am-3pm. For more information, call 575-382-0018.

### Saturday, January 27th

*SHAS Adoption Event*

PetSmart, 2200 E. Lohman, from 10:30am-2:30pm. For more information, call 575-805-5338.

## FEBRUARY

*Spay/Neuter Awareness Month*

Help stamp out animal overpopulation. To learn more, contact SNAP at 575-524-9265, snapnewmexico.org.

*Pet Dental Health Month*

Take care of your pets' teeth like you would take care of your own. See your veterinarian about dental care/checkups.

### Thursday, February 1st

*Rudy's to the Rescue*

Adoption Promotion at Rudy's, 1020 N. Telshor Blvd, from 4pm-7pm (on the side patio). For more information, call 575-805-5338.

### Saturday, February 10th

*Valentine Photo Booth*

Safe Haven Thrift Store, 840 El Paseo Rd. from 10:30am-2:30pm. Get your furry Valentine's picture taken! For more information call 575-805-5338.

### Tuesday, February 27th

*World Spay Day*

Contact ASCMV for low-cost spay and neuter surgery appointments at 575-382-0018.

## MARCH

### Thursday, March 1st

*Rudy's to the Rescue*

Adoption Promotion at Rudy's, 1020 N. Telshor Blvd, from 4pm-7pm (on the side patio). For more information, call 575-805-5338.





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# Dates



## Tuesday, March 13th

### *K-9 Veterans Day*

A time to commend the courage of all dogs who serve and protect. Honoring all military, police and working dogs for their service and sacrifice. Thank you for your service!

## Wednesday, March 21st

### *Yappy Hour is BACK!*

St. Clair Winery & Bistro, 1720 Avenida de Mesilla, beginning at 6pm. Music, door prizes, silent auction and food/drinks from the menu, including beer and wine. Well-behaved, leashed dogs welcome. \$5 at the door, benefits DACHS and SNAP.

## Saturday, March 24th

### *SHAS Adoption Event*

PetSmart, 2200 E. Lohman, from 10:30am-2:30pm. For more information call 575-805-5338.

## APRIL

### *National Heartworm Awareness Month*

By protecting our dogs we, as pet parents, can also protect ourselves from the heartache that can come from the loss of a canine companion or the expensive and difficult treatment due to this preventable health issue. To learn more go to [www.heartwormsociety.org](http://www.heartwormsociety.org)

### *Prevention of Animal Cruelty Month*

Report animal abuse! Call Police Dispatch at 575-526-0795. You can remain anonymous or provide your name if you would like the Animal Control Officer to contact you.

## Thursday, April 5th

### *Rudy's to the Rescue*

Adoption Promotion at Rudy's, 1020 N. Telshor Blvd, from 4pm-7pm (on the side patio). For more information, call 575-805-5338.

## Wednesday, April 18th

### *Yappy Hour*

St. Clair Winery & Bistro, 1720 Avenida de Mesilla, beginning at 6pm. Music, door prizes, silent auction and food/drinks from the menu, including beer and wine. Well-behaved, leashed dogs welcome. \$5 at the door, benefits DACHS and SNAP.

## UPCOMING SPRING EVENTS

### *Tails to Freedom Flight Programs*

Flight programs in October and December gave 120 shelter and community pets new lives in Idaho and Montana. Next flights will be in Spring. If you can volunteer, donate or offer any assistance, contact Tails from the Shelter, 575-323-1151 or email [savinglives@uncagedpaws.org](mailto:savinglives@uncagedpaws.org)

For a complete calendar of events, visit

**DogCruces.com**

List is updated as events are announced



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## Don't Ignore the Little

*Dr. Pirtle's article about lumps and bumps from our Winter 2013 issue flashed into Mayor Vic's mind recently when his household had a scare with one of their Golden Retrievers. We decided to reprint the original article, along with Star's story, as related by Star's mom....*

It was early November when I ran my hand down the front leg of *Star*, our 10-year-old Golden Retriever. I always do so during a good chest rub, and that's when my heart sank—I felt a rock-hard lump on the top of her front leg. It wasn't a gelatinous, fatty-feeling lump that I could roll around with my fingers and which, from experience, was always just a common fatty tumor. And it didn't feel like the kind of bump that forms temporarily around a foreign object (like a cactus thorn) that enters the skin as an irritant. It was a hard nodule about the size of a marble, maybe larger.

For those who don't know the Golden Retriever breed, they are plagued with cancer; there is even a new Morris Animal Foundation's Golden Retriever Lifetime Study currently underway to try to make some new advances and understand K9 cancer. They chose to start by studying one of the breeds most often affected by it—the breed I love so much. You can read about the study at [caninelifetimehealth.org](http://caninelifetimehealth.org). Hopefully, life-changing info will be gained to help pets that suffer from cancer.

This wasn't our first experience with canine cancer, so I was already going over our options in my brain. At 10, *Star* is considered old for a Golden (AKC lowered the breed's life expectancy from 12-15 years to 10-15 years because of their health issues), so while I didn't exactly panic, I knew we had to act fast.

Our first step was to take her to our vet and get her lump aspirated—it came back "inconclusive." Our vet suggested removal, but I was hesitant because of the tumor's location relative to her bone and tendons and, of course, her age. I could see there wasn't a lot of room around the tumor for removing healthy, surrounding tissue, which

I know is an advantage when removing lumps IF they turn out to be cancer.

We have friends who were going through the exact same thing with their older dog—she had a gelatinous, fatty tumor on her side that appeared to be nothing to worry about. Unfortunately, it *was* cancer. Thank goodness our friends didn't assume it was benign, and instead went to the vet to be sure! Their vet was able to remove the tumor with a wide margin of good tissue around it. So fingers and paws crossed she will not have any more.

Our vet believed *Star's* tumor was growing. He said there would soon be no room to get completely around the tumor to get that good tissue and that it could possibly hinder her mobility.

After overcoming my glass-is-half-empty fears (my husband is a glass-half-full kind of guy) and worries about how it might affect *Star's* spirit, we decided to go for it.



While *Star* was under the effects of anesthesia, our vet aspirated all her lumps and bumps—some new, and some she'd been living with for years. He said while she

was under, he could go deeper with the needle than he could when she is awake for a normal office visit. He ended up removing a second lump on her hip because it had "reacted badly under the microscope." Better safe than sorry. The vet sent both tumors off to pathology, and we waited for the results to come back. We spent a lot of time with *Star* while she healed during the holidays, and we received the best possible Christmas news ever—both lumps were benign!

We are so glad we heeded the advice in Dr. Pirtle's article—and so are our friends. Without having your vet check out any lumps and bumps, you simply can't be sure what is lurking underneath your dog's skin.

One of the most common complaints I hear from clients every day is that their dog has some kind of lump, bump, or growth—on the skin, or underneath it. Although many people



**DogCruces** ❄️ Winter 2018

# The Vet's View

by  
Dr. Scott Pirle, DVM

## Lumps and Bumps!

will have these checked as soon as they detect them, others will choose to ignore it for long periods of time. Often it will come up in a casual conversation when they bring their dog in for some other problem or routine immunizations. I'd like to offer some broad advice on what to do about lumps and bumps in this edition of *DogCruces*.

The first thing to understand is that almost all dogs will develop at least one—and sometimes numerous—skin or subcutaneous growths in their lifetimes. Some of these growths may be nothing of significance, while others can be life-threatening malignancies. How is a dog owner to know when or why to seek veterinary attention when his dog develops a growth? My conservative advice is this: anything new or unusual deserves a look by a professional. This includes any new skin/subcutaneous masses that you detect on your pet. If your dog develops a growth, get it checked. Granted, the large majority of skin growths in dogs are not serious, but it's better to get them evaluated rather than to ignore what could be potentially serious problems. I'm a proponent of taking a proactive approach to dealing with these types of problems. Masses that develop under the skin are even more likely to be of concern. Again, *all* of these deserve to be examined by your veterinarian.

If you find a growth on your dog, your veterinarian may be able to offer some advice based on the appearance, consistency, location, breed of dog, and other clues. There are certain types of growths that we see over and over, thus allowing us to offer a reasonable idea of what it may be. But no veterinarian can tell you what the majority of growths are just by their look and feel.

We will often utilize a test called a "fine-needle aspirate" to look at some cells from the growth. This procedure involves a small needle being inserted into the skin or subcutaneous mass and drawing some cells into the needle with a syringe. The contents of the aspirate are then placed on a microscope slide and stained, before being examined with a microscope. Some of these growths will be easy for a veterinarian to diagnose based on the appearance of the cells. However, most of the time your veterinarian will be trying to

**...*"let's just wait and see what happens"* is usually an unwise approach. Waiting only gives a tumor time to grow, spread, or cause other complications.**

obtain broad information about what the growth may be. Do the cells look like they could be from some type of infection or inflammation? If so, what kind? Or, do the cells appear to be from a tumor of some type; and if so, are there characteristics that suggest the growth could be a malignancy? This information will help your veterinarian offer a treatment plan if needed, and hopefully will offer you some peace of mind.

In spite of this type of diagnostic approach, frequently we, as veterinarians, are unable to give a definitive diagnosis of what a growth might be. In this case, I usually suggest surgical removal of the mass with evaluation of the tissue by a pathologist. "Watchful waiting" or, "let's just wait and see what happens" is usually an unwise approach. Waiting only gives a tumor time to grow, spread, or cause other complications.

The chance for successful surgical removal of any tumor is best when the mass is small and new. Allowing a tumor to grow will only increase the chance for it to spread to other locations if it is a malignancy. The larger the growth, the more difficult it may be to completely remove the tumor. And for those that are concerned about putting their pet through a surgical procedure, I say better to do it now than later. A larger growth is more involved to remove. This means more pain for your pet post-operatively, a longer anesthesia during surgery, more expense, and less chance of a successful outcome. It is better to be proactive and deal with the problem early on when success and cure is more likely.

Another mistake is to assume that a new growth on your dog is the same as something they may have had before. Each and every separate tumor or growth should be evaluated independently from any pre-existing or previous tumor.

The bottom line is this – if your dog develops a growth of any kind **seek veterinary advice as soon as possible**. While most growths will end up being minor or something benign, avoidance and procrastination are never a good idea. You never know when it could be something serious or even life-threatening. Better to find out and address it immediately so you can take action to keep your dog happy and healthy.

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# An Anti-Christmas Carol

by  
**Ebenezer Scrooge**



**T**is the season. Ho, ho, ho and all that jazz. And so—because Charissa told me I could write about whatever I wanted to write about—I'm going to tell you random things about how *Toby* and I process the holidays. (If I were you, I'd strongly consider moving directly on to the next article at this point.)

I used to keep a fully-decorated tree in one of my closets. I'd drag it out every year on the day after Thanksgiving, blow the dust off it with a can (or two) of compressed air and then plug its merry little light string into the socket by the festive fake fireplace. *Toby* would dutifully pee on the base, and then I'd go get a bourbon and gaze at the colorful reflection of the beautiful lights in *Toby's* pee puddle, occasionally looking up at the actual tree.

The parrots were not fans of any part of this process. You could tell by the nature of the squawking that they were not practicing the avian version of *My Favorite Things* as made

famous by Julie Andrews. The noise they made was more like Death Metal for The Yule.

The tree would stay up—with the lights controlled by one of those lovely little timers—until New Year's Day, when *Toby* would mope and the parrots would go crazy again while I dragged it back to its closet.

This was our tradition, and it was a fine one right up to the year that the light string shorted out and fused itself to the plastic branches of the tree, filling the house with an acrid smell the likes of which one usually can find only by aggressively sniffing the carpet at a fraternity house.

I've since put the closet to use for conventional and non-seasonal storage, so there's been no thought put into replicating the old traditions. These days, the holiday season comes and goes just like the rest of the year comes and goes. I'm OK with that. In fact, I've become a great fan.

Well, I still put up the string of outdoor lights along the front eaves of the house each year. Same schedule as the old tree ritual. This year, they were a few days late going up because, frankly, they resisted from their box in the garage, and I wasn't up to the fight. I posted about it on the Book of Faces, and was reprimanded by all the cheerful people in my circle of friends—and so I eventually capitulated. You know those people—the kind who voluntarily wear Santa hats in public.

Speaking of the Book of Faces, I posted this on December 5: Went to one of my favorite lunch spots today. Christmas music was blaring. I told my server, "I'll order and eat here if you'll turn it off." She disappeared for

a few minutes, and then: blissful silence. One by one, the rest of the staff all quietly came up to thank me. Who can eat (or serve) an enchilada with *Frosty the Freaking Snowman* as ambient noise? Carry Scroogily on.

People in my circle of friends have some truly strong feelings about Christmas music. Within minutes, my iPad was heating up with alerts from people replying to the post.

Within those replies, my friends Dave and Joyce educated me about *Frosty*, for which I had all my life blamed Burl Ives. It turns out that the old cowboy actor Gene Autry wrote that song. He also is responsible for *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* and the Easter favorite *Here Comes Peter Cottontail*. How he was not lynched by John Wayne and a posse of angry cowboys, I just don't know.

But I digress. While many people responded to the post to declare their position on Christmas music, none of them seized on what I believe is the most salient sentence, which, to me, was this one: One by one, the rest of the staff all quietly came up to thank me.

Because let's face it: Even *I* need to listen to something else besides Jimmy Buffett all the damn time! Forcing your staff to endure Gene Autry's oeuvre repeatedly for days and weeks on end is almost certainly going to have an adverse effect on employee morale. I'm guessing this can be especially dangerous in an environment featuring kitchen knives.

The point of all this is that I'm not a very good observer of this (or any) mass holiday, although I do miss *Toby's* ritual of watering our tree. If you read this far, you deserve the merriest of Christmases or the happiest of Hanukkahs or the most rad Kwanzaa ever in the history of holidays! Go do your thing, and be festive! I'll be over here guarding the egg nog. Pay no attention to this flask.

*Jess Williams is a regular contributor to Dog'Cruces for reasons known only to Mayor Vic and his delightful staff of merry elves.*



**Toby Tim says... "Dog bless us, every one!"**

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***You do NOT want to  
see this coming at you!***

***If you do, it means you're the bad guy  
and are about to get bitten by an  
LCPD K-9 Officer.***



***Photos by John Connell Photography***

# The Dog Always Wins



## Dog'Cruces PD Live!...

or at least that's what it felt like while Phyllis and I spent several evenings with the Las Cruces Police Department (LCPD) K-9 Unit. I have to admit, it was kinda fun when we stopped for an evening snack at a convenience store, and as I walked out, the clerk told the officer with me "I didn't know Dog'Cruces had its own police now." I guess the bulletproof vest with "Dog'Cruces Media" stitched on the front gave him that impression. Maybe the clerk is onto something...or maybe we should just let the pros do their job—and that's exactly what these officers and their K-9 partners are, pros. It's been six years since our last LCPD story, and some things have changed and some haven't, but one thing that most definitely has not changed is the dedication of these officers. I can honestly say that if it were up to Phyllis and me alone, we would ride along with these officers every week and write about them in every issue.

I'm not sure if it was the highlight or the most painful part of my experience with the team, but one moment K-9 Lexa had her paws around me giving me kisses, and 10 minutes later I was wearing a bite sleeve and she was trying—no, not trying—she was biting my arm and taking me to the ground! Luckily, one more command from Officer Roman, and Lexa released me and was ready for more kisses. It only took three days for my arm to recoup from that. Here's my advice: If you're a bad guy—give up...the dog always wins!

So let's put that into personal perspective (this is Phyllis now): A violent criminal has fled into a local neighborhood, loaded shotgun in hand. The LCPD K-9 Unit arrives to assist the Doña Ana Sheriff's Department (DASO) and the Border Patrol, who are already on-scene and have secured the neighborhood. Residents are aware that the situation is extremely dangerous, and one family hears and reports suspicious noise and activity in their backyard.

If it were your backyard, imagine your reaction. Imagine keeping yourself and your children away from the windows and hoping your doors are

locked. You wonder how the police can get to the subject without putting themselves in the line of fire. You hear a gun shot. Where are your pets? What will happen if the subject takes a hostage? You listen to your heartbeat, ticking down the minutes, passing like hours, until you hear the repeated announcements, in English and Spanish, "This is the police. Show yourself! If you don't show yourself, the dog will find you, and he will bite you."

You hold your breath, with your arms around your children—time suspended—until suddenly the dog is growling and the intruder is screaming, and you know you're safe—because "the dog always wins."

From the perspective of law enforcement—because this was a real case here in Las Cruces—Officer Gabe Arenibas' K-9 partner, *Shady*, shared the win with everyone else on the scene, all of whom walked away from what could have been a violent and tragic encounter. Officers had had to take cover when the subject shot at a Sheriff's Deputy, but *Shady* was able to pinpoint the subject's location "by his body posture and his breathing." With that tactical advantage, officers were able to take him into custody without compromising anyone's safety, including the subject's—no bullets and not even a bite. As Pat Doyle, the Unit's Sergeant puts it, their "dogs are good solutions for bad problems."

The LCPD K-9 Unit is comprised of one sergeant, five officers, and their partner K-9s. Officers test into the Unit, acing a 100-question exam, plus the stringent physical requirements. Officer Gabe Arenibas inadvertently left me with homework because he cited case law throughout our shift (all night), and I had to research everything from lawsuits to amendments just to put myself in the conversation. It's an elite Unit that responds to forced entries, robberies, foot pursuits, SWAT call-outs, felony arrests, violent crimes, homicides, gang activity, drug trafficking—all the high-priority calls. An assignment to the Unit is a coveted position because the officers see lots of action—and, no doubt, because their K-9 partners are amazing. Each member of the team trains his or her own

K-9 partner, even if the dog arrives from the vendor with some discipline (perhaps even Schutzhund training). The vendor is confident in his dogs' breeding and offers the LCPD a one-year return option. The Unit has invoked it only once (and the dog was placed elsewhere) because, as Sergeant Pat Doyle puts it, "it's not about the best dog or handler, it's about the right dog or handler."

This is a well-oiled, frictionless Unit, where all the jigsaw pieces fit together perfectly. Officer

Jennifer Roman says K-9 officers "train really hard to use their dogs effectively."

The Unit certifies its own dogs. Their in-house basic training lasts an intense six weeks, integrating "incredible genetics with incredible capability," but the process never really ends. For the duration of the dog's service with the Unit, the human and K-9 partners train 10 concentrated hours a week, and that training is intense.

Vic was brave enough to don the bite sleeve—twice—but when I heard him yelling, and when I saw the human officers' bruises, I decided loving on the dogs after their practice would suffice for me. Even beyond those 10 hours a week, the human officers stop to let their K-9 partners exercise and train a little when there's free time during a shift. The dogs have unlimited energy and love getting out to have some fun—fun to them is working hard.

I don't think the dogs know they're spoiled, but they each live a working dog's dream life. They get to rev up for lights and sirens, really excited at the prospect of a task, and at the end of the day, they all go home with their human partners.

**Sergeant Doyle says the kids "hang on the dogs and handlers like playground equipment." He laughs and says "The kids believe the dogs are superheroes, like the Avengers," and then he adds quietly, "they are."**

by **Phyllis Wright,**  
with **Vic Villalobos**

**Maybe you'd like to meet all the officers first-hand! Think about a ride-along, invite them to your children's schools, and thank them at your next opportunity!**

**Seargent  
Patrick Doyle  
and  
Rikki**



**Officer  
Anthony Lucero  
and  
Zodiac**



**Officer  
Juan Gomez  
and  
Joker**



**Sergeant Doyle says Rikki is so “BRUTALLY powerful [that] our decoys shy away from decoying sometimes in bite work. On the social side, he is a giant teddy bear... he transitions roles well.”**

They don't go home to isolated kennels, either; they're part of their human partner's family—eating super-healthy meals, hanging with the family, and snuggling on the couch. They will retire when they're between seven and nine years old. LCPD doesn't want to work them past their potential to enjoy retirement. After their service, they get to spend the rest of their years with their human partners.

These are not the aggressive, muzzled stereotypes of bygone days. LCPD's vendor prioritizes intelligence and trainability, as well as drive and temperament, for the K-9 Unit's dogs. Officer Arenibas attributes their success to “proper training

and proper deployment.” Sergeant Doyle describes the dogs as ready to be violent, not vicious. He says, “Vicious is zero control; these dogs are the epitome of control.”

As a result, the entire Unit is extraordinarily versatile. They can take down a violent criminal on a Monday night, and show up at 7:30 AM Tuesday morning for a birthday at a preschool or a demonstration for a government entity. Sergeant Doyle says the kids “hang on the dogs and handlers like playground equipment.” He laughs and says “The kids believe the dogs are superheroes, like the Avengers,” and then he adds quietly, “they are.”

On my ride-along with Officer Jennifer Roman, her K-9 partner *Lexa*, a lithe, affectionate Belgian Malinois, tried all night to get her head into a position for kisses and—OK—French Fries. I saw her in training, though, and Vic isn't kidding—she hit his bite sleeve so fast and so hard I missed it on video—he was down before the camera caught up. As Sergeant Doyle describes it, Mach 1. On command.

When the question becomes how to send a human officer safely into a dangerous situation, the answer may be to *not* send the human, but to send the K-9 officer, instead. The K-9 officers are fast, task-oriented, confident, and fearless. Officer Roman makes the point that “dogs save time—they can accomplish in one hour what it might take 20 or more human officers to accomplish in the same time.” Or as Officer Arenibas puts it, “the dog is a force multiplier.”

In an incident when LCPD's SWAT Team was working to apprehend a suspect who had forced himself through a tiny hole in a ceiling and was hiding in an attic, K-9 Officer Juan Gomez shouted repeated announcements in English and Spanish and then inserted his K-9 partner, *Joker*, into the shallow, cramped attic space. *Joker*, an otherwise super-playful, social Belgian Ma-

linois, rocketed to the subject and clamped down on him before a human officer might have forced his shoulders or a piece of equipment into the subject's view. Sergeant Doyle notes that “when 20 people and one million dollars of equipment can't solve a problem, a K-9 can get it done in two minutes.” And *Joker* probably saved even more than time. Sergeant Doyle says that “dogs save a lot of cops and a lot of people.”

These dogs are also incredibly versatile. They can find weapons and smell out subjects when “1000 things are going on at one time.” They can track criminals into vehicles, down streets, and through structures—or track and find lost children, like the ten-year-old boy who wandered into the desert in 15-degree weather during the recent holidays—and was saved by a K-9 officer.

The dogs fit into confined spaces, like culverts and sheds, and crawl spaces. They know no fear—no place is too tight, too dark, too disturbing. In attic incidents, the dogs can deal with the dust, and the heat, as well as the tight space. It's one of many dangerous jobs for these K-9 officers, but they're fast, they're agile, and they're incredibly well-trained. They are so effective that “99% of subjects give up before any kind of force is used,” according to the human officers.

They also report that most people fear dogs more than they fear guns, and dogs can certainly accomplish what no firearm can. In a recent incident, LCPD's SWAT Team was serving a warrant for aggravated child abuse. The subject refused to come out of the house in which he was hiding. The SWAT Team introduced gas to try to force the subject out into breathable air, to no avail. The subject had descended through a partition the size of two placemats into a crawlspace that extended under the whole of the house, a cramped two and half feet in height.

The SWAT Team introduced gas into the crawlspace. Still “nothing, nothing, nothing.” They sent in a robot, but the robot got stuck in all the wiring and among all the pipes. Still no subject. Ultimately, the K-9 Unit introduced *Rikki*, Sergeant Doyle's Dutch Shepard, into the crawlspace on a lead, but the leash tangled in the wiring and the plumbing.



**Expertly trained and devoted to their jobs, the snuggle-puppy mode on command. May**



**Officer  
Gabe Arenibas  
and  
Shady**



**Officer  
Jennifer Roman  
and  
Lexa**



**Officer  
Isaiah Baker  
and  
Ayk**

**Officer Arenibus says “Shady is a Belgian Malinois. At work he is loyal, courageous, and fearless. At home, ‘he’s curious, playful, and very loveable.”**

As sergeant Doyle tells it, “the subject has been hiding from law enforcement for three and a half hours. We’ve been making voice announcements [in both English and Spanish] the whole time—nonstop announcements. He is continuing to resist law enforcement. He’s a known violent offender, so we’re going to send *Rikki* in without the lead. Within ten seconds, the subject was screaming” and “we were able to take control of the bad guy and pulled him out of the hole, and he was still kicking and punching the dog.” Not gonna work. Sergeant Doyle says “the more you do that, the harder they bite. They are not going to lose the fight; it’s not in their genetics.”

And then he asks “how would I send a police officer in full gear . . . to crawl through the entire area safely, through the gas, in the total darkness, in the middle of the night, with the subject lying in wait, breathing through a small vent hole? But I can say to the dog ‘let’s go!’ Then it’s done and done.” All the K-9 Officers love doing their duty.

Those duties are even broader than finding people in the desert and attics and crawlspaces and getting happy attention at school demos and birthday parties. These dogs are also trained as narcotics dogs. It’s a specific focus, to avoid duplication of effort in other law enforcement entities, leaving NMSU to concentrate on their explosive detection dogs and Mesilla Valley Search and Rescue Team to focus on their Human Remains Detection (HRD) dogs. A dog’s incredible sense of smell (220 million olfactory receptors to our human 5 million) mean that they will find whatever they scent—from clues to drugs. Suspects often just give up when the dogs arrive on scene—they know it’s over. As Sergeant Doyle says, “The dogs are jacks of all trades—and masters of all trades, too.”

These highly trained and motivated human and K-9 officers are in demand. The Unit deploys directly with the LCPD SWAT Team and Gang Unit, but they also assist the Doña Ana Sheriff’s Department (DASO), the New Mexico State Police, US Marshals, and the FBI. They get requests for help from all over the southern half of New Mexico,

from Lordsburg to Hobbs, and everywhere in between. But their hearts are in Las Cruces.

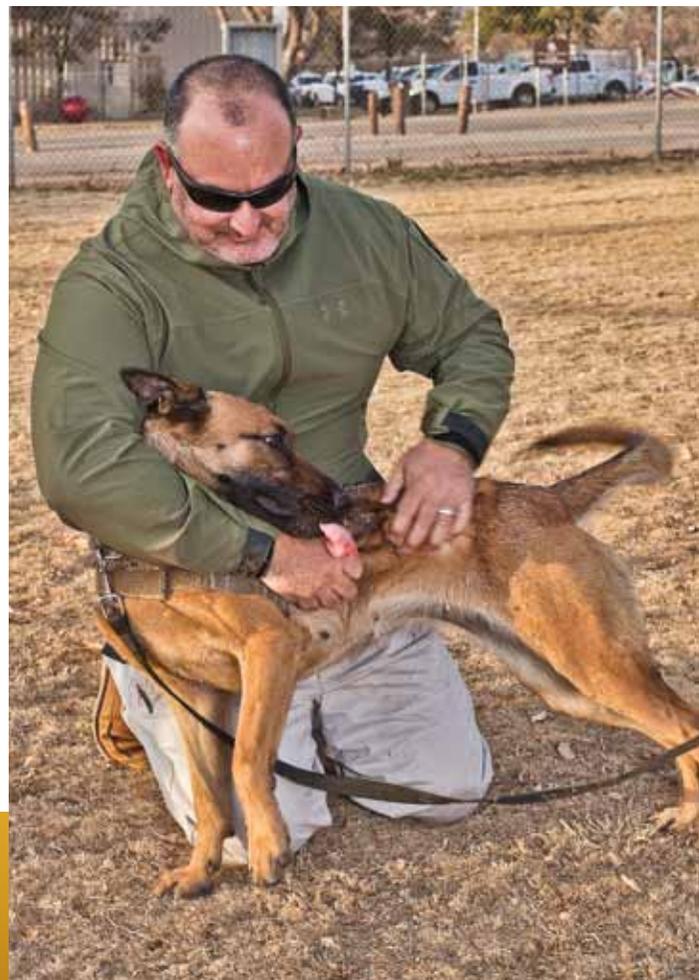
The Unit has a vested interest in the community. Every human officer in the Unit is a D.A.R.E. officer. Everybody coaches at least one sport, from Little League baseball to football to basketball. Their office is festooned with thank-you cards from children, a confirmation of the Unit’s priorities—using their K-9 partners to facilitate social interaction with the community. Sergeant Doyle described an afternoon at the Mesilla Valley Mall when a little boy ran up to him, threw his arms around his legs and asked about *Rikki*, Sergeant Doyle’s K-9 partner, who had obviously made a big impression during a school demonstration. That’s the goal. Sergeant Doyle says that “we as a group want to work on social integration with kids.”

They’re looking to the future, as well as to the next emergency. All of the officers talk about the importance of their interaction with members of the community and how the dogs help to personalize law enforcement for everyone who meets them.

The Unit was founded in 1991, and has seen only three supervisors and 12 handlers in these 27 years—that’s the kind of dedication this Unit fosters, regardless of the long hours and the potential dangers. The officers all say “it’s the best place to be.” Officer Roman, the first female officer in the Unit, by the way (so cool!), likes that “they ride around with their buddies all day.” Officer Arenibas says there’s nothing better than working with dogs.” Sergeant Doyle, who calls it “the coolest job in the world,” describes *Rikki* as “somewhere between a child, a best friend, a partner, and the best tool in the shop—that always works.”

When I jumped in the car for my first

ride-along, I confess, I was hoping for lights and sirens, but what I witnessed was even better—the LCPD K-9 Unit’s commitment to the community’s well-being. Vic got it right—we don’t need a *Dog’Cruces* PD, because the LCPD K-9 Unit is there for all of us. I hope we honor their commitment and remember that our local heroes, human and K-9 alike, work hard for this community and put themselves at risk for us—*Shady* and *Joker* and *Lexa* and their fellow K-9 Officers would cross the rainbow bridge for us—selflessly. It’s in their training and it’s in their character. Let’s hope we never see that day—and imagine our lives if we were all as loyal as dogs, if we could all love like dogs, and if we all believed in each other like dogs believe in us. We would “always win,” just like they do.



**LCPD police dogs shift from attack mode to  
or Vic is not laughing, he is screaming.**

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# Workin' Like a Dog



## Unpleasant, but Invaluable—Training at the Body Farm

A solo hiker slips on a steep trail in the Gila National Forest and falls to her death. When she misses her trailhead pickup, she is reported missing by her family. K9 Search And Rescue (SAR) teams are called to search the vast and rugged Gila Wilderness. While every SAR team dreams of finding people alive and well, this is not possible on every mission. Each year hundreds of people die in the outdoors doing activities they love. In these situations, SAR members become focused on locating the body to bring closure to family and friends. Search dogs are an essential tool used in finding deceased subjects.

Training a dog for Human Remains Detection (HRD) is a challenging task. "Training Aids" are used to introduce the scent of dead humans to the dogs. These aids consist of cloth or gauze that has come in contact with deceased humans or, in some cases, small bits of actual human remains. Dogs become proficient in sniffing out these small amounts of HRD scent. So the question for the handler becomes—"can my dog generalize this training to be able to locate a complete human body?"

Luckily, there are research facilities designed to address this question, as well as all others associated with human remains. The Body Farm, or more formally, the Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State University, is a 4,200-acre facility located on the Freeman Ranch in the heart of Texas Hill Country. The Texas State ranch is one of six university facilities dedicated to the study of the decomposition of the human body. It offers workshops that focus on exposing dogs to the challenges of HRD detection.

In November, three dogs and handlers from the Mesilla Valley Search and Rescue (MVSAR) team had the opportunity to attend a workshop at the Body Farm. All three dogs are already trained in live-finds for SAR, and for the past year they have also been working through the HRD program designed by the Border Patrol's Special Operations Group. The Body Farm experience had a profound impact on all of us—humans and canines alike—and made us stronger as search teams.

The first day began with a morning briefing on scent theory, some background information about how dogs react to human remains, and a rundown of the Body Farm rules we needed to



follow—no electronic devices, no food for us or our dogs, and no peeing or pooping except in designated areas.

After the classroom work, we headed out to a non-research portion of the ranch used to introduce K9s to the program. To gauge the reaction of the dogs to scent items larger than the usual training aids, we all started off with a human leg suspended from a small tree. All three of the MVSAR dogs approached with some caution but handled the large scent source very nicely. After that, we engaged in exercises involving small- to medium-sized sources hidden in brush piles, earth or rocks. The comfort level of all the dogs increased, and they all presented their handlers with solid alerts (a signal that conveys to the handler that the dog has located human remains). HRD detection is very serious work, but it is essential that the dogs view it as a game. After each find my dog is rewarded with a round of tug using a special toy brought out only for HRD work. As handlers, our goal is to create a consistent and accurate search dog by building his drive to succeed and rewarding him for a job well done.

In the afternoon the training moved to a highly controlled research portion of the ranch where the handlers were required to wear disposable boot covers, and the dogs had to walk through decontamination pools. The first exercise involved locating the body of a person who had died just two days earlier. The opportunity to work with a body this recently deceased was amazing, because it closely emulated what we might encounter on an actual search. The body was covered with evergreen branches, so the dogs had no visual

clue what was there and had to work exclusively off of the large scent pool generated by the body. All of the MVSAR dogs did a great job with this scenario.

Another reason for keeping the body covered was that, up to that point, the dogs had not made the connection that the scent they are trained to find is actually coming from a human body. All search dogs are closely bonded to humans and are accustomed to interacting with them; thus, a non-responsive cadaver can be very disturbing. The next exercise addressed this issue. The body was several weeks old, located in a small clearing and completely visible. The scenario was carefully set up so that the dogs approached the body from its feet to avoid seeing its human face, which is known to be the

most disturbing part for the dogs. All the MVSAR dogs were very cautious as they approached the body, sniffed and made the connection about what they had found. We quickly rewarded them with praise, special toys, and a game of tug to emphasize that finding the body is great and the exact behavior we wanted. As I rewarded my dog, *Wave*, with a game of tug, I noticed that his grip on the toy was weaker than normal, and I could see the white part of his eyes as he glanced over at the body a few feet away from us and struggled to process what it all meant.

Day Two at the Body Farm began with the fully exposed body again. The dogs showed a much higher level of confidence, and after the find, *Wave* fully engaged in the celebratory game of tug. The rest of the day was devoted to introducing all the different ways a dead body could smell—dead for a few months, dead for a few days, dead with the cause of death being drug-related, etc.. One of the most interesting exercises was to locate a body that had been buried several years earlier. The grave was next to a tree, and every one of the dogs first smelled the leaves and followed the scent to the ground. (The interaction between plant and human decomposition is a topic of ongoing research at Texas State).

The Body Farm workshop was a unique and rewarding experience. As a handler, my knowledge and confidence increased, and the confidence of my dog soared. Spending the weekend with bodies in various stages of decomposition requires a healthy amount of dissociation, and even with that, it is icky—but it is necessary for making us the search team we want to be.

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# A Matter of Policy

## Does Pet Insurance Make Sense for Protecting Your Precious Pups?

*Routine vet bills are a part of being a responsible dog or cat parent, but unexpected disease or injury can wreck even the most meticulous budget planning. Wouldn't it be great if Fido and Fluffy could be included on your health insurance plan?*

*OK, that's never going to happen. But you can purchase pet insurance policies from a variety of sources—including some of the national companies we're all familiar with. Cathi Buchman from Buchman Insurance Agency offers an introduction to the basics of pet insurance, and outlines some of the questions you should consider when looking for a policy that's right for your furry family members....*

**T**he idea of insuring the health of animals is more than a century old. The first pet insurance policy was written in 1890 by Claes Virgin, and it focused on horses and livestock, as dogs and cats weren't popular as "pets," and certainly weren't considered part of the family back then.

The next 90 years saw dogs and cats begin to take their positions as beloved family members, and in 1980, Veterinary Pet Insurance was the first—and only—company to offer pet health insurance in North America. Now there are more than a dozen different companies selling coverage for our furry friends—yet fewer than 10% of the pets in North America are insured.

So what, exactly, is pet insurance? Simply put, a pet insurance policy can reimburse you for necessary vet bills if your dog or cat is sick or injured. It can help you afford to choose a better course of treatment and help you avoid major financial setbacks due to a pet's injury or illness. The North American Pet Health Insurance Association (NAPHIA) was founded in 2007 to help establish and maintain standards, quality and ethics in the pet insurance industry.

So what does a pet insurance policy cover? Well, that depends on the plan you pick. Just like your own health insurance, there are different coverage options for your four-legged friends. Here are some things to consider when making the decision to purchase pet insurance:

What are the different coverage levels? Do you want very basic coverage, or a policy that will pay for most accidents and illnesses? You can choose different levels of deductibles and co-pays—just like with your home, auto and health insurance.

Your pet will probably *not* have to undergo a physical exam before being eligible for coverage, but most policies specifically exclude any pre-existing condition. So if your 10 year old cat has cancer *before* you purchase a policy, there will be no coverage for any costs related to that cancer. That's why it is important to purchase the insurance when you first get your pet. Most policies will have a waiting period—for example, 30 days—before coverage takes effect.

It's important to consider whether your policy allows you to choose the vet you want to use, and whether it covers emergency/after hour clinics. Also, if you travel with your pet, you will probably want a policy that provides coverage outside your home area.

How is the reimbursement calculated, if you do file a claim? Most companies will require you to pay the bills and then file claims to get reimbursed for your expenses. Reimbursement amounts vary depending on the procedure performed and the plan you have chosen—typically, plans will reimburse 70%, 80% or 90% of your expenses.

Most pet insurance policies will have set limits for some things. For instance, there may be an annual limit, meaning the amount that you could be reimbursed during one year. There could also be a lifetime limit. These amounts will vary depending on the package you choose. As your pet ages, both medical costs and insurance premiums can increase, so check to see if the policy you're considering has an age limit.

You can get policies just to cover accidents, or those that cover almost everything. It just depends on how much you want to

spend for your policy. If you are interested in pet insurance, you need to do your research. If you know someone who has this coverage, ask them how satisfied they are with it, what their policy covers, and the price they pay. Make sure the company you are buying from is a reputable company, and will pay claims without hassle. The NAPHIA website ([naphia.org](http://naphia.org)) provides a wealth of information about pet health insurance.

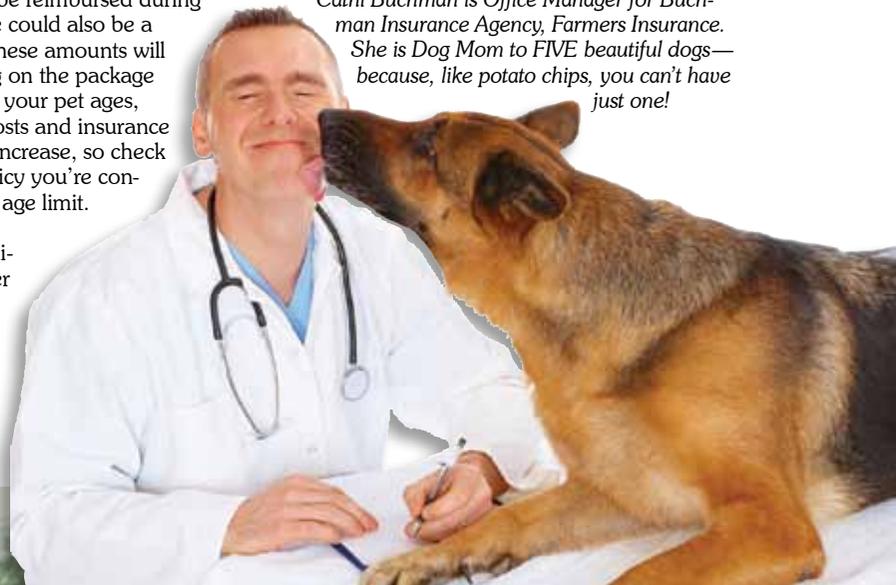
You should also be familiar with what is specifically excluded, or not covered, in the policy you choose. Parasites, like heartworm, may *not* be covered, which means it is extremely important to give your pet preventative medication, which *may* be covered. Treating your pet for heartworm is an expensive process.

Premium costs can run from about \$10 per month—for a very basic, accident-only policy—to around \$100 per month for a policy that will cover most accidents and illnesses.

My vet told me that only about 1% of her clients have insurance for their pets. Is pet insurance worth it? For many pet owners, insurance has proven invaluable in helping them care for their best furry buddies. It has surely saved lives by making catastrophic injuries and chronic illnesses affordable to treat. But, as with any financial decision, each family's needs are different, and a chat with your own vet might be the best place to start.

*Cathi Buchman is Office Manager for Buchman Insurance Agency, Farmers Insurance.*

*She is Dog Mom to FIVE beautiful dogs—because, like potato chips, you can't have just one!*



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# Traveling With Your Best Friends

by Vic Villalobos

## Bowled Over in Arizona!

As we all know by now, NMSU won the Nova Home Loans Arizona Bowl—their first bowl game in over 50 years! But my story starts long before that glorious day.

I have never been a huge sports fan—not even football. On Sundays when people are settling in to watch a game of football, I'm content finding a rerun of *Braveheart* or *Saving Private Ryan*. But when my friend Steve's dog, *Striking*, became the tee retrieval dog for the NMSU Aggies' football team, I was all in! I started going to all the home games and stood at Steve's side as *Striking* anxiously awaited his next chance to go onto the field. I quickly became *Striking's* publicist/personal assistant.

People always ask me "what exactly do you do down on the field?" Well...um...I pet *Striking*, I get people lined up to take pictures with him, I pet him some more, and then I rub his belly. Oh, and I take all the live videos for social media. But mainly I pet him a lot. Over the years I have come to really like the Aggie team and enjoy the games.

Fast forward to the last home game of the season—we have a chance to go to a bowl game. As the game clock was counting down and *Striking* flawlessly retrieved another tee, I found myself standing next to the head of the Arizona Bowl. I pointed out how awesome *Striking the Wonder Dog* is (as a good publicist would) and he said that if NMSU did qualify for the Arizona Bowl he wanted to see *Striking* there with the team at the game. After the game was over I told Steve we needed to make our reservations to go to Tucson... I had a good feeling we would accept the invitation to go.

The following Monday I started making calls to my new friend who heads up the bowl. Before we knew it we had our credentials, and *Striking the*



*Striking the Wonder Dog*, on the sideline with the Aggies at the Nova Loans Arizona Bowl, awaits his next opportunity to retrieve the tee after an NMSU score.

*Wonder Dog* (and his posse) were heading to the bowl with his Aggies!

When I made our reservations at the Tucson KOA, I noticed they had a new type of RV site—one with its very own private dog park! Not to mention the covered parking, firepit and citrus trees! So that's what I rented, and we were very happy with it. It was actually a pretty great spot and we enjoyed the extra space for our dogs.

Ahhhh...game week. The RVs were packed with lots of treats (human and doggie) and all of our crimson clothing, so we hit the road. It was amazing to see how many NMSU fans had invaded Tucson! I mean, I knew they'd sold a lot of tickets, but it didn't hit me *how many* until we stopped for gas and Aggies were waving at us because we all had the same color shirts on. We pulled up to stop lights and looked over at the next car to see another Aggie fan giving the thumbs up. It was awesome!

Steve and I arrived early on game day to give *Striking* some extra practice time before the game. As soon as we walked into Arizona Stadium we realized we weren't in Kansas anymore. It's an almost-overwhelming venue. We watched the Aggies practice and got in

a few runs for *Striking*, as well. I could tell Steve was a little nervous at first (I was too), but *Striking* is such a pro that he quickly put us at ease as he retrieved the practice tees perfectly. To *Striking*, this was just another field and another game.

As the game started it was truly amazing to see the size of the crowd, but even more impressive to hear the roar of the crowd—it was deafening at times! I became a real, full-fledged Aggies football fan that day. The constant roar of the crowd sent chills up my back as we got closer and closer to winning. The Aggies kept *Striking* busy as the lead changed hands several times before NMSU's tremendous overtime victory. Then came the harder part (for me)—keeping people in line for all the photos with *Striking*. We actually lost count of how many hundreds of people wanted photos with him...it was an awesome time with an awesome dog!

Once the game was over we experienced the same sea of crimson in the parking lot, on the streets of Tucson, and picking up dinner. I don't think the folks at In-N-Out Burger knew what hit them! We retired back to the KOA, where our other dogs had been waiting patiently for our return. We took a short walk, ate our burgers, and were ready for bed after a long and wonderful day. For the first time in my life, I experienced the End-of-Season Blues, and I now anxiously await next season and where it might take us on our next adventure!



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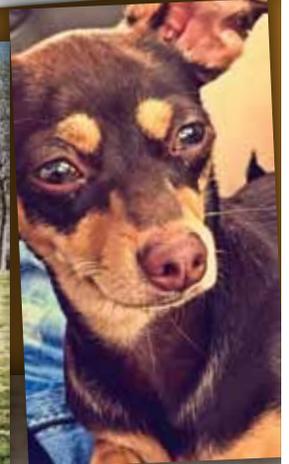


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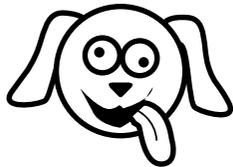
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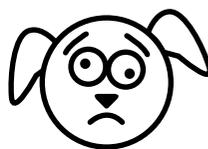


Dog Cruces Winter 2018



# DOG LIBS

featuring Summer and Penny



## A Very Doggie Victory

Penny and Summer were \_\_\_\_\_ —they were going  
ADJECTIVE      EMOTION

to \_\_\_\_\_ to see the \_\_\_\_\_ play in the \_\_\_\_\_ Bowl!  
PLACE      TEAM NAME      NOUN

“You know who’s going to be at the \_\_\_\_\_, Penny?” asked Summer.  
EVENT

“Striking the \_\_\_\_\_ Dog! He is so \_\_\_\_\_, I hope I get to \_\_\_\_\_  
ADJECTIVE      ADJECTIVE      VERB

him!” When they arrived, the parking lot was full of \_\_\_\_\_,  
ADJECTIVE      PLURAL NOUN

and everyone was wearing \_\_\_\_\_! One man was  
COLOR      PLURAL CLOTHING

playing \_\_\_\_\_ on a \_\_\_\_\_, and there were \_\_\_\_\_  
SONG TITLE      MUSICAL INSTRUMENT      NUMBER

women trying to \_\_\_\_\_ at the same time. “\_\_\_\_\_!”  
VERB      EXCLAMATION

exclaimed Penny, “It’s all too \_\_\_\_\_ for me! I wish I was back in  
ADJECTIVE

\_\_\_\_\_, watching all this on my \_\_\_\_\_!” “Oh, grow  
CITY OR TOWN      APPLIANCE OR DEVICE

up,” said Summer. “Look at all the \_\_\_\_\_ these people are dropping!”  
TREATS

The dogs gobbled up \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, losing all track of time.  
FOOD      FOOD

Suddenly, a \_\_\_\_\_ exploded from the crowd. “What happened?”  
SOUND

wondered Summer. A \_\_\_\_\_ boy in a \_\_\_\_\_ jersey shouted,  
ADJECTIVE      TEAM NAME

“We won! Larry \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_th scored the winning \_\_\_\_\_!”  
FLOWER      NUMBER      TYPE OF SCORING PLAY

“\_\_\_\_\_ is delicious,” thought Summer, “I can’t wait for next season!”  
SPORT



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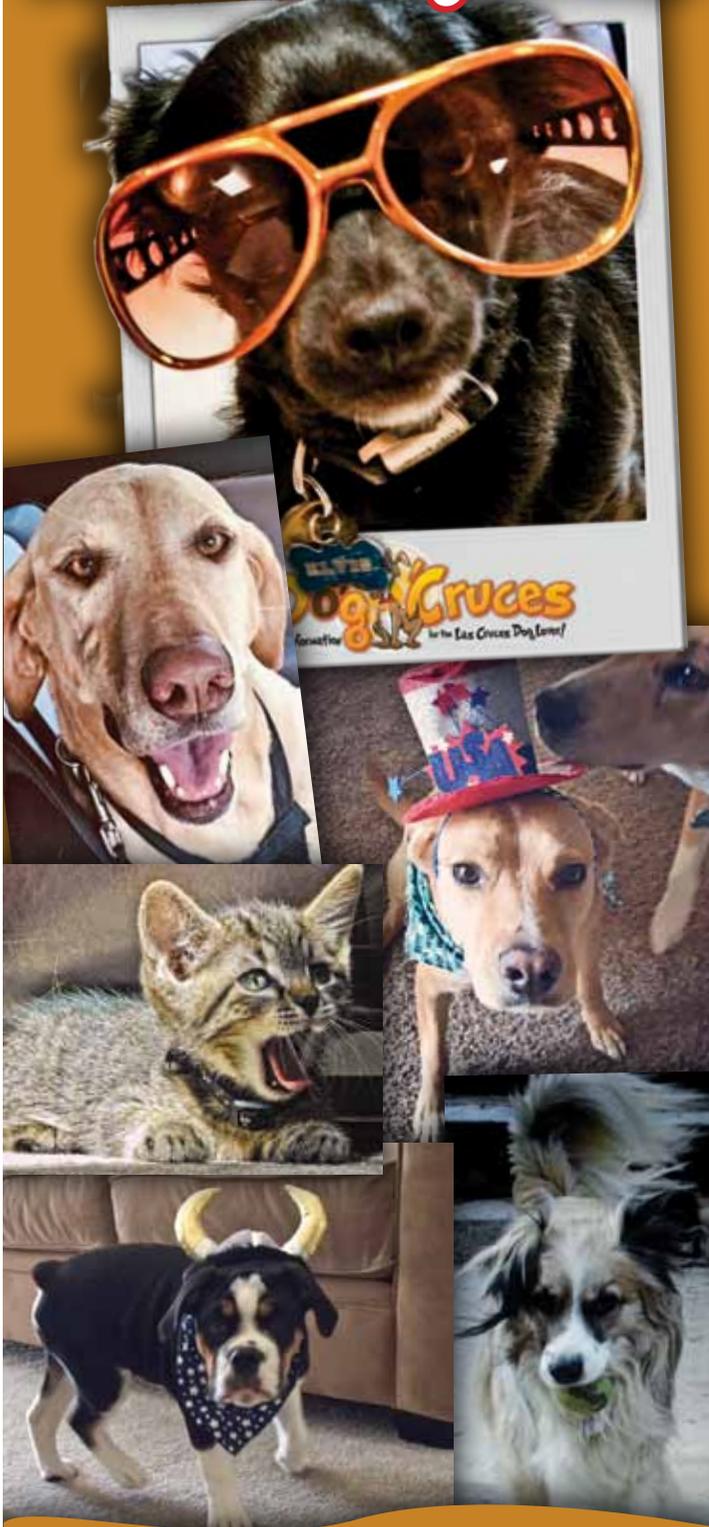
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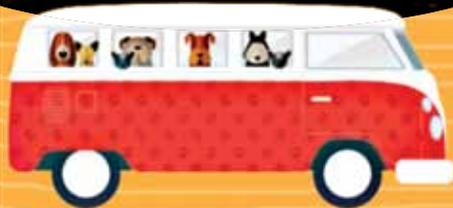
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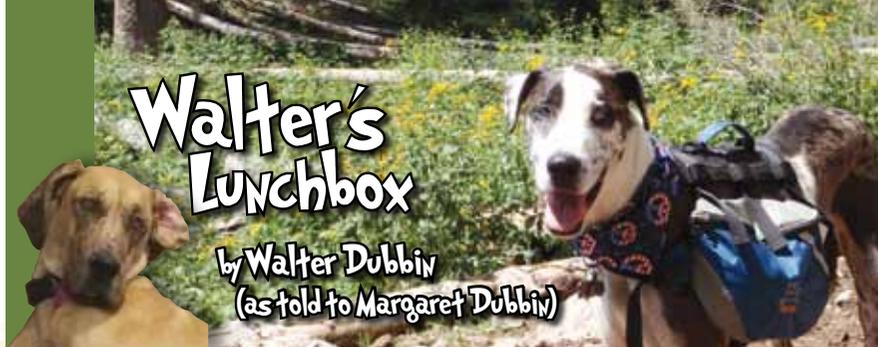


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## Walter's Lunchbox

by Walter Dubbin  
(as told to Margaret Dubbin)

## What's So Great About a So-So Dane?

**H**appy New Year Folks! I hope y'all had a fantastic HOWLiday and that Santa PAWS was good to you and your pups. Wow! What a year 2017 was! I don't know about you, but 2017 was a crazy busy year for us. Between camping trips, Mom's work, and the usual house-keeping busy-ness, we had a tremendous number of doggie birthday cake orders—which makes me super happy, because that means there are some really lucky and super-spoiled pups out there.

Also, we had an opportunity to take Walter's Lunchbox to the next level! We teamed with my pal Miss Whitney's students at New Mexico State University and ACES Food Production Co. to co-package Walter's Lunchbox Dog Treats on a regular basis. Now we can supply some local retail shops with our handmade, ovenbaked deliciousness! Although we have some added overhead, we will continue to pledge that portions of the proceeds go to area animal rescues, shelters or charities. I'm SUPER excited about our launch of this next phase of Walter's Lunchbox—thank you, PAWSome readers, for your support!

SO! On to the not-so-thrilling part of 2017.... Do you recall when I talked about Mom's wacked-out idea of "fostering" or even "adopting" another pup to our crew? Do you also recall how I said it would totally cramp my style and that I was certain it could *never* happen because Dad was adamant about holding to the two-dog-limit rule? WELL...one day last October my Auntie Renee brought home this scrawny, emaciated little girl Dane who was found in the middle of the highway and taken to a rescue. Auntie took her to foster. Mom conned Dad and me into going to meet this new girl by telling us we were going out to get pizza and beer. Well, less than 5 minutes after meeting this skinny, red-headed, long-legged little bitch—who falls completely in LOVE and says we need to ADOPT her? Not Mom...but DAD!!!

I was beside myself when they decided to bring this new little pain-in-the-butt home with us! I would have bet all the biscuits in the world that Dad would never, *ever* make an exception to his own two-dog rule! How the heck did this happen?!

So now I have a baby sister named *Ginger*. She's a 10 month old huge, clumsy, droolin', wild mess of a clearly-not-so-great Dane. She and *Butthead* have become pals—playing and roughhousing while *I've* been the only one working to teach her some manners. She has absolutely no sense of personal space and is even more of a suck up than *Butthead* ever was. Needless to say the past few months have required a pretty big adjustment in

our household. Dad soon realized the exponential impact of that decision he'd made during a moment of weakness. Now we have *three* dog beds in every room, *three* food bowls, *three* leashes to wrangle, *three* times the food and vet bills. We now run out of biscuits *30% faster*—and *Ginger* always leaves the water bowl empty!

Mom told me I ought to have patience with *Ginger* because she's just a pup and was likely abandoned because no one had the patience to teach her how to be a good doggy. Well, at least she doesn't go around peeing on the same trees and shrubs I pee on the way *Butthead* does. It is kinda nice having a sister again. I guess she can stay.

### Loco Moco Meatballs

- 1 lb Lean Hamburger  
(or ground turkey/chicken)
- 3 Eggs
- 2 C Cooked Rice
- 1 Sheet Nori, finely minced (optional)
- 1 Tbsp Coconut Oil



Combine ground meat, 2 eggs, rice, and nori together well with hands. Shape into bite-sized meatballs, according to breed size. Heat coconut oil in a frying pan. Dip each meatball in the remaining egg (beaten) before placing in frying pan. Brown the meatballs on all sides until cooked through. Cook time will depend on the size of meatballs. Allow to cool before serving. Store leftovers sealed in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

### Chicken & Veggie Smash Biscuits

- 4 Eggs
- 1C Mashed Potatoes
- 1C Mashed Carrots
- 1C Mashed Peas
- 2/3 C Chicken Broth
- 4 C Brown Rice Flour
- 1C Oatmeal
- 1/4 Tsp Granulated Garlic (optional)
- 1/2 Tsp Dried Parsley



Preheat oven to 375°F. Combine dry ingredients in a large mixing bowl. In separate bowl, mix together wet ingredients until thoroughly blended. Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and mix until a moist dough forms. Using a melon baller or 1/4 Cup scoop, scoop dough and place onto parchment-lined cookie sheets. Cover with another sheet of parchment paper and similarly sized baking sheet, press baking sheet to smash dough to 1/4" thick. Remove top baking sheet and parchment paper. Bake for 45-60 minutes (depending upon size of biscuits) or until center of cookie is firm. Leave cookies in the oven, turn off oven and allow cookies to completely cool.



DogCruces ❄️ Winter 2018

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

## Fat Cat? Help Kitty Get Skinny!

**M**ore than half of all the cats in the United States are considered obese. According to a 2014 survey by the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention, that number is only going up. There are many potentially chronic issues your fat cats are likely to develop. Here are just a few...

**Diabetes:** Cats are carnivores, and feeding them grain-based foods can lead to obesity, which can result in diabetes. High carbohydrate foods will process like sugar and can build up in the bloodstream. This can make your cat's body less sensitive to the effects of insulin. If your cat shows symptoms like increased urination and thirst, is overweight, and is eating a grain-based diet, a trip to your vet is in order. Left untreated, diabetes can kill your cat.

**Liver Disease:** Obesity can increase the risk of Fatty Lipidosis or fatty liver disease. If your cat is overweight DO NOT attempt to reduce its intake of food drastically in order to lose weight quickly. A gradual weight loss is much healthier, since a quick reduction in food intake can trigger Fatty Lipidosis. A cat's liver is not designed to process large amounts of fat. The liver of a fat cat becomes stressed, and fat starts to build up in and around the liver cells, compromising liver function even further. Almost ALL cases of Fatty Lipidosis are associated with obesity. Studies show that 35% of cats diagnosed with this disease—even after intense treatment—will die.

**Inflammatory Bowel Disease:** Many overweight cats suffer from chronic gastrointestinal disorders. IBD can be caused by a number of different sources, among them a lack of good gut flora. When cats eat grain-based food and poor quality processed kibble, their intestines become damaged over time. They are then unable to process certain proteins and fats due to the lack of probiotics that come from high quality, protein-based foods. Since obese cats tend to be fed commercially-processed plant-based types of foods—a far cry from the diet they are designed to eat—IBD can become an issue.

**Periodontal Disease:** Many obese cats develop gum disease due to their commercial dry kibble diet. If left untreated, periodontal disease may cause the liver to stress and trigger the previously-mentioned Fatty Lipidosis. Periodontal disease can



also cause heart damage and compromise the functionality of all other organs.

So what are the solutions? As carnivores, cats evolved to digest small, frequent meals that are high in protein and low in carbs—such as mice, voles, gophers, and birds. There are only 30 calories, on average, in a mouse. The typical dry cat food is much higher in carbohydrates and calories, and many cat owners leave a bowl out for the cat to graze on all day, which is extremely bad—this will only cause poor health and large vet bills in their future. Instead, help your cat lose weight, or prevent weight gain, by feeding kitty small, high protein meals at specific times of the day. At least two meals are okay, but four small meals are better.

I feed my cats a raw diet at least once per day. They prefer Rad Cat, a healthy complete raw diet that thousands of cat owners prefer. My big 18-year-old weighs 16 pounds, so he gets about the equivalent of a gopher. My 21-year-old gets about the size of a small mouse (about 2 tablespoons), and the same goes for my two active young cats. For their next meal, I section a 5.5 oz can of high quality, grain-free canned food such as Nulo or Avoderm, and add probiotics and enzymes to the top for them to share. Later in the day, I repeat these two small meals—but sometimes add a tablespoon or two of high quality, grain-free dry food such as Fromm or Nulo, also adding the probiotics and enzymes on top. I always feed more on the weekends to make up for any lack of appetite during the week. My cats also get treats like fish skins and Smart Cat Dental treats. None of them are overweight.

Cats that remain indoors all the time must have some sort of play time and exercise equipment such as climbing trees. I have five large climbing trees for my cats to scamper up and chase each other, as well as three or four scratching posts. Growing wheat grass for them to munch is also an added benefit for your indoor cats' digestive needs. Plenty of sunshine is very important, as well.

Place the cat trees close to a window that gets lots of sun so your kitties can bask in it.

Always feed your felines the best food you can afford to insure they have a long, healthy, better life.

Kat Lacy is the owner of Better Life Pet Foods



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Savannah Petracca and Scout won Better Life Pet Foods' annual Halloween costume contest, dressed as Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion. Savannah decided to donate her prize to ACTION Programs for Animals, and took little sister, Naomi, along to share in the giving spirit. Way to go Savannah!

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