



2015 STORIES OF THE YEAR

RIVERSIDE COUNTY

ANIMAL SERVICES



We always seem to keep very busy. Every year there are stories that break our hearts, stories that make us smile. We see a lot of sad events in our world. But we also see the genuine good from strangers for others' pets. We get to watch an owner get reunited with their wayward pet — something we never tire of seeing. We are also in debt to the hundreds of volunteers who donate thousands of hours of their personal time to assist homeless pets and make our outreach events and activities run smooth.

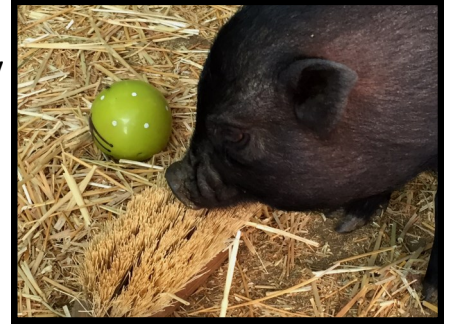
Speaking of debts: we **MUST** say thank you to all of the rescue group organizations that assist us every day with saving pets from our shelters. Each and every year thousands of animals from our shelters are saved by these groups.

We hope you like the list we compiled here. We couldn't rehash **EVERY** story we liked in 2015, but this list captures some of the ones that impacted us, made us happy — and angry. As some of you may recall, we were punched in the gut when our main shelter was burglarized and damaged during a mid-September break-in event. It led to the deaths of dogs at our shelter. The Riverside County Sheriff's Department launched an intensive investigation and it didn't take long for investigators to make an arrest of the man believed to have caused the chaos that September night. The felony animal cruelty case is pending in Riverside County Superior Court.

It was not all gloom for us, of course. Yes, we continue to investigate animal cruelty matters and witness the aftermath of horrible neglect by bad pet owners. But this year could not have ended on a better note, as some of you may have seen in recent television news broadcasts. (The touching story involving a three-legged kitten at our San Jacinto shelter that was adopted by the parents of an amputee child will remain one of our favorites for many years to come; it's part of our list, below.) Here is a chronological list of our top stories of 2015. ENJOY!



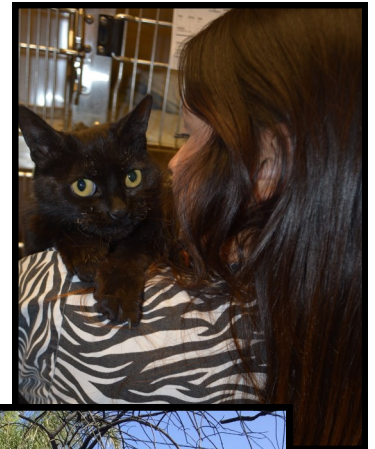
FEB. 3 – PIGGY SURPRISE: A pot-bellied pig was left inside main shelter's night drop box. Our night-drop boxes are mostly used by Good Samaritans safely placing a stray dog into the compartments and locking it. In the morning, the dogs are examined by veterinary team members and then kenneled. In February, the morning crew members were surprised to discover a small, pot-bellied pig. The piglet was nicknamed Paisley and was soon adopted by a very nice woman.



MARCH 17 – CAT STOWAWAY: A woman stopped at the border inspection check-point in Blythe was surprised to discover a U-Haul rental trailer had a cat inside it; it was unclear how the cat got inside without detection and how long the orange-and-white Tabby was inside the trailer, but the cat did have a microchip and was owned by a South Carolina woman. We reunited the fuzzy stowaway with the owner, thanks to donations from START Rescue. A team of our Coachella Valley employees safely transported the cat to the

Palm Springs International Airport where the cat started on its long journey back home.

APRIL 16 – JURUPA VALLEY BRUSH FIRE: Animal control officers rushed to a neighborhood in Jurupa Valley and immediately started to evacuate pets in the path of a fast-moving brush fire; Although the fire was not huge, high winds did create a scary situation for a few moments. Pets in the path were evacuated from homes and, a bit later, reunited with appreciative pet owners. One sweet, black cat escaped up a tree to avoid the flames and our friends with the Riverside County Fire Department provided a major assist by helping us retrieve the feline safely. Yes, the poor thing had her whiskers singed, but was otherwise OK.



MAY 19 – SHACKLEFORD: A cat got all tangled up inside a car engine, but Officer Will Luna saved the feline and our vet team made sure the cat survived. The cat ended up having an amputation and was adopted.



JUNE 2 – KITTYHAWK: A Jurupa Valley woman spotted a hawk flying away with a kitten. The white kitten escaped the talons — or was it dropped? The kitten dropped to the ground, but lived to tell about it (er, meow about it). The kitten, nicknamed Kittyhawk, was eventually adopted by a nice woman and her young daughter.



JUNE – SADIE/ROSIE, EMBEDDED COLLAR DOG: A young man and his girlfriend discovered a pathetic-looking, skinny dog near their home, coaxed it over with some turkey slices, then contacted Riverside County Animal Services once they safely got the German shepherd mix inside their yard. Even after the dog was out of their hands and safely inside the county's main shelter, the young man and his girlfriend could not get the dog out of their head. The couple asked if they could visit the dog, whose poor health included an embedded collar, a condition caused when a rope or collar has been left on the dog as it grows, causing constriction. It was one of the worse cases of an embedded collar our seasoned veterinarian

team members had ever seen. But with some tender loving care and, of course, some professional treatment, the dog we called Sadie healed very well. Soon thereafter, Ernesto Perez and his girlfriend, Miriam Rodriguez, the couple that first helped the dog, officially adopted her and changed her name to Rosie. Mr. Perez said that he could not believe someone treated the dog "like trash," and he promised she would be given a great life.





JUNE 11 – RUSTY, BEATEN TO DEATH WITH A SHOVEL: It was one of the most horrific animal cruelty investigations of 2015. A Whitewater man is facing allegations he beat a dog to death and then tossed the lifeless mutt over his fence. Lt. John Stephens responded to the scene and scooped up the barely alive dog, rushed it to an emergency animal hospital, and then returned to the neighborhood to continue his investigation. Fortunately, neighbors witnessed the man's heinous actions. Unfortunately, the dog succumbed to its injuries. A felony animal cruelty case was filed and it is still pending. Although the suspect disappeared after the death of the dog, sheriff's deputies eventually captured him. Although the dog was a stray, those in the community all cared for the 3-year-old terrier mix and had nicknamed him "Rusty."

AUG. 26 – PINKY SURVIVES FIRE INSIDE RV: A

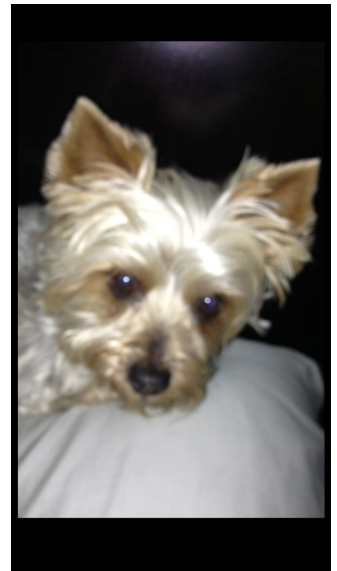
Hemet-area couple escaped their burning recreation vehicle, but poor Pinky, their pet pit bull, suffered serious burns during the frightening ordeal. The story touched many people in our community. Pinky was examined and treated by veterinary professionals at the county's main shelter and provided pain medications. The family visited Pinky as she remained in the county's care. Once Pinky was OK to be released, the tearful family were very excited to finally be reunited with their beloved pet. Pinky was given a good prognosis, despite the injuries.



SEPT. 8 – NORTH SHORE FATALITY:

In one of the most serious stories of 2015, a dog attack in the Salton Sea's North Shore community led to a man's death and serious injuries to a woman. This tragic story ultimately led to ramped-up efforts by our Coachella Valley Animal Campus-based officers, led by Lt. Luis Rosa. His team of officers conducted multiple sweeps in the North Shore and nearby Mecca where roaming dogs have been an ongoing concern.

SEPT. 12 – MAIN SHELTER BREAK IN: September was a very tough for our department, wasn't it? The break-in in the late hours on Saturday, Sept. 11 led to a chaotic scene when staff members showed up early Sunday, Sept. 12. Dogs were loose everywhere. Some were dead. A major investigation was launched and, in just a few days, a suspect (Jason Ernst Johnson) was ID'd and an arrest warrant was issued. Jason Johnson was ultimately arrested and a felony case is pending in Riverside County Superior Court. A couple weeks after the break in, a group of employees pooled together some donations to buy flowers and pay for the cremated remains of one of the dogs that died in the heinous act at the shelter; the flowers and the cremated remains of Bella (pictured) were presented to the dog's owner in a private ceremony at the shelter.



OCT. 17 – SHELTER PET NAMED OFFICIAL STATE ANIMAL (PRESS CONFERENCE AT MAIN SHELTER): Our main shelter played host to a handful of VIPs making the big announcement that the shelter animal is now the official state pet for California. It marked a major step in an ongoing education campaign about the importance of shelter animals. It was a very public reminder about the importance of adopting — instead of shopping — for a family pet.

OCT. 14 – CHIP THE HUSKY: A dog was the unwilling participant in a violent police pursuit.

The dog was inside a sport utility vehicle driven by a man who shot and wounded a California Highway Patrol officer in West Covina. (The officer survived.) A police chase ended in Fontana and that's where officers discovered the husky; a freelance videographer captured footage of the startled dog pop out of the disabled SUV. We worked with Fontana Animal Services to put out a news release when the dog was available for adoption, asking the would-be adopter to make a donation to the 11-99 Foundation (fund for fallen/wounded officers). The dog was nicknamed "CHIP," to honor the highway patrolman. Several employees participated in reviewing dozens of essays from potential adopters. A Los Angeles officer was selected in what we all thought was a perfect fit.



DECEMBER – BURROS ROUNDED UP,

ADOPTED: It is one of the more feel-good stories of the year. The recent roundup of more than a dozen burros in Highgrove was initiated because of a new rail service by Metrolink that likely would have led to potential deaths of the free-roaming burros. Soon after the burros were rounded up, some were transported to the nonprofit rescue organization DonkeyLand and every single one of the remaining burros were adopted by loving families.

DEC. 22 and Dec. 29 – HOLLY THE KITTEN

RESCUED, SAVED: Two Perris women found a badly injured kitten, likely the victim of a mechanical injury when someone started their car engine. The women brought the 3-month-old, gray-and-white feline to the caring staff at the San Jacinto Valley Animal Campus. It was there that “Holly” would be saved. Surprisingly, Holly recovered very well, despite having to lose her right front leg to amputation. The story doesn’t end there, though. We put out a news release about Holly’s miraculous recovery and told the public she was available for adoption. Enter the Tipton family. Simone and Matt Tipton were seeking to adopt an amputee kitten so their cancer-fighting daughter, also an amputee, would have a pet that mirrored her disability. The par-



ents’ six-month search for an amputee kitten was all part of an effort to teach their 2-year-old daughter, Scarlett, that she, similar to the



kitten, can push forward despite losing a limb. And, oh, the kitty now goes by the fun name Doc McStuffins.

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