**Officials express regret over euthanized dog**

Top of Form

Bottom of Form



**Officials express regret over euthanized dog**

Jake Tormohlen and his Black Lab Gino search a truck for explosives as part of an exercise in Iraq. Gino was mistakenly euthanized Oct. 12 by Show Low Police Animal Control after being picked up by Navajo County Animal Control Oct. 6. Both Show Low Police and Navajo County have expressed regret over the incident.

Posted: Tuesday, November 8, 2011 5:00 am | *Updated: 4:18 pm, Mon Nov 7, 2011.*

Sean Dieterich - The Independent |

*Editors note: This is a continuation of a story that ran last Friday.*

SHOW LOW - Bonnie Tormohlen has been upset ever since her black lab Gino was mistakenly put down. Both Show Low Police and Navajo County have since expressed remorse over the incident.

Gino got out of his yard Oct. 6, after what Tormohlen believed was a fight between her dogs and another dog. According to the county, Gino was picked up that day by Navajo County Animal Control and taken to the Show Low city animal shelter. Tormohlen called various shelters trying to find her dog, including Navajo County and Show Low Police, but Gino was euthanized by a Show Low Police animal control officer and kennel technician on Oct. 12.

Tormohlen is saddened over the turn of events, but Show Low Police Chief Jeffrey Smythe said she is not the only one, being an animal lover himself.

"I'm saddened that this woman's dog was put down," he said. "It's absolutely not a good scenario."

Bernard Huser, the Navajo County Animal Control program manager, said the county does feel remorse, especially since the dog was picked up at a house near Tormohlen's. Navajo County Risk Manager Tim Norton said if their microchip scanner was working properly, things would not have turned out as they did.

"If the scanner works, (Gino's) home within 15 minutes," he said. "That's the heart-breaking part."

The malfunctioning chip scanner is believed to be the cause of Gino's accidental euthanization. Huser said their animal control officers scan every dog they pick up. While Gino was microchipped, it did not show up in the county's scanner.

Huser said if a chip is discovered, animal control officers call the Humane Society of the White Mountains for help in researching the animal's origin. He said the Humane Society then calls animal control back with the information.

Huser said he does not know how the chip scanner malfunctioned, or even how long it had been malfunctioning, but it is no longer in use. Norton added they did not know their chip scanner was not working properly until this incident, as Show Low Police scanned Gino post-mortem and found his chip.

However, Tormohlen said she wonders why Show Low Police did not scan her dog at the beginning and avoid all this. Smythe said although they housed the animal, it was still a county animal control case. He said Show Low is one of a few cities that rent kennel space to Navajo County Animal Control, and the county went through their protocols when impounding and eventually deciding to euthanize Gino.

According to Arizona Revised Statute 11-1013, the county is able to enter into cooperative agreements with cities, veterinarians or humane societies to establish and operate a county pound. Each animal impounded will be kept at the kennel for a minimum of 72 hours, or 120 hours if the animal is wearing a license, which Gino was not. After that time period, it is the county's decision whether to place the animal up for sale or to humanely dispose of it.

Given that Gino was picked up on Oct. 6 and euthanized on Oct. 12, Smythe said the county kept him nearly twice as long as required.

If there is one thing Tormohlen wants to come out of Gino's death, she said, it is that people need to take multiple steps to safeguard their animals. She said pet owners should keep their information updated with the microchip companies and take updated photos every six months. She said animals should have multiple forms of identification; tags and licenses for example on top of microchips.

"Don't just depend on officials to do their job," she said.

Tormohlen said pet owners should also make sure their pet's vaccinations are up to date and keep local animal control and humane society numbers and addresses on hand. In the event a pet does run away from home, she said people should physically check the shelters for their pet as well as calling them.

Smythe said he also supports pet owners doing what they can to safeguard their pets to both keep them from getting out and getting them back safely if they do. Huser said multiple forms of identification are a good idea.

"It's always good to have a back-up plan," he said. "Just because your dog is chipped is not a guarantee you're going to get your dog back."

Huser said pet owners should be sure to update their pet's information, especially on microchips and if changing owners, so animal control can take the pet back to the right owner. He said all pets should be licensed and tagged, and to register a pet through the county costs $5 and is available through local veterinarians, the Humane Society and online. He said he also urged people to keep their pet's vaccination records on hand.

Finally, if an animal does get out, Norton said information on the county shelters is available on Navajo County's website at [www.navajocountyaz.gov](http://www.navajocountyaz.gov). By clicking on "Animal Control" under "Departments" and then clicking on "Search for Lost and Found Animals," he said people are able to get information on where their pet is at and when it was picked up if Navajo County did recover it.

Reach the writer at sdieterich@wmicentral.com