Livingston Dog Survives Trip in Trash Truck to Great Falls Landfill

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Livingston Enterprise
by Hunter D’Antuono, Enterprise Staff Writer

A Livingston dog found itself down in the dumps early this month — quite literally. A terrier ended up in a landfill near Great Falls after slipping into the bottom of a semitrailer hauling garbage from the Livingston Transfer Station.

The dog survived routine garbage compaction and the odorous, 180-mile journey to the landfill totally unscathed. He was returned home after being discovered by the semitrailer’s driver, Kyle Meier, a driver for Montana Waste Systems, picked up a load of garbage from the Livingston Transfer Station around 10 a.m. on June 3. He discovered the dog as he dumped his trash trailer at a landfill just outside of Great Falls early that afternoon. The truck’s trailer has a “walking floor,” which is a conveyor belt-like system that pushes garbage out of the back of the trailer. At the bottom edge of the trailer near the cab, a small mesh-covered window allows the driver to check the status of the dumping process, which can take over 20 minutes.

Meier peeked through the mesh window, he met the pooch’s gaze on the other side. He said because the garbage is compacted, he was surprised to see the dog alive. Unable to retrieve the dog out from under the layers of dense trash, Meier waited for the truck’s floor to push the dog out with the remaining refuse. Meier found a leash in the garbage and clipped it to the dog’s collar, which had tags for the Stafford Animal Shelter and a Livingston veterinary office. “He was a little stinky, but no worse for wear,” Meier said.

“He just looked at me like it was just another day.” Meier brought the dog to the Great Falls Animal shelter later that day. Sherry Morgan, an office clerk for the shelter recalled Meier coming in and saying, “He’s a nice little dog, I just hate to think he came all the way from Livingston.” Morgan contacted the Stafford Animal Shelter and gave them the story. “I was kind of shocked,” said Gwen Strachan, front desk manager for the Stafford Shelter. “I didn’t believe he could make it through that without getting hurt.” Strachan said the owners of the dog had called two days before she received word from Great Falls to report their terrier was missing. The owners of the dog, who live near the transfer station, did not wish to comment for this story.

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After trash is dumped, it is pushed into a long rectangular opening in the floor on the other side of the building, where it collects in a trailer below. The opening has a smooth, slanted metal plate lining its front edge — a surface that wouldn’t provide much traction for a dog’s claws. Livingston Transfer Station attendant Casey Purcell said this isn’t the first time a dog has slipped into the trash trailer. In his five years at the Transfer Station, Purcell estimates about a dozen dogs have slipped into a trailer after jumping out of their owners vehicles and following their noses to the source of some smelly delight. But he said none were ever injured or hauled away. “You never know what you are going to find in the garbage,” he said.

The fun begins with a 5K Fun Run/Walk sponsored by Small Dog Realty. The course rounds the Yellowstone River and through the streets of historic Livingston! Friendly, vaccinated dogs on leashes and children under 13 are welcome to join for free! Pre-registration is $25.00; day of event $30.00. (race fees are tax deductible). Registration forms available on our website. We recommend that you check in by 8:00 am to receive your bib number. Fun Run starts at 9:00. Check in at the Miles Bandshell Park.

The festivities continue from 10:30 to 3:00ish (depending on the number of contestants) with the ever popular dog contests in the City Pool and Miles Bandshell Park. Events include fastest dog, best pet & person costume duo, children’s obstacle course with their dog, speed swimming, longest dock jump and best canine swimsuit. Our event will be emceed by the fabulous duo of Victoria Bell & Pam McCutcheon. Don’t forget the cats, we have a coolest cat photo contest, so bring a photo of your kitty. Events are only $5.00 with all money donated to the animals. We’ll round out the day with camel rides along the Yellowstone from Camel Discovery, fun raffle prizes from West Paw Design, Bissell Pet Vacuums and more, enjoy a demonstration from Park County Sheriff K9 Cash, kids activities, a festival of local pet friendly businesses and food vendors including “Hot Dogs for Shelter Dogs” (vegan dogs included), beer from Katabatic Brewing, Wilcoxson’s Ice Cream, Lemonade Stand and more... Bring your appetite, your pets and your family and help raise money for a great cause!
We have officially opened ‘The Bon K9 Rescue Center’ in our barn. This project was eight months in the making and is now a reality thanks to Battle Ridge Construction, Tech Electric and Outhouse Plumbing and Heating. “The Bon” is short for Bonnie Allchin who so generously donated the funding. We have installed seven new in-door/out-door kennels which doubles our capacity to take in dogs! The four Reservations we work with are begging us to take in more homeless pups and now we can do more to help!

Recently I was asked by Tracy Raich what the shelter’s biggest need was. I did not hesitate to say “a shelter vehicle to transport animals.” We had been using our own cars, knowing picking up unknown animals from all over the state could compromise the health of our own pets. Tracy funded our downpayment and we brought a van from Yellowstone Country Motors to Fur Ball and asked if other supporters would donate and get their logos on our “Rescue Ride.” The generosity was overwhelming and we paid for the van that evening.

Alicia, Nick and I attended the 2016 Shelter Animal Expo in May. We learned many ways to reduce the stress of dogs and cats in a shelter environment. The Humane Society of the US had done a study and found larger cat kennels reduce the stress in kitties by up to 50%. We found Cat Condos that doubled the size of living space for our cats. We mentioned this at Fur Ball in our Dutch Auction and raised enough funds to purchase nine units. Come to the Shelter and see how our cats are enjoying condo living!

Karyn Tilton is leaving the shelter after seven years of excellent service. Karyn’s love for animals led her to get a degree in pre veterinary medicine at MSU. She has been accepted into Vet School at Colorado State and will attend this Fall. Congrats are in order!

We have taken in over 500 critters year to date - all shapes, sizes and species - and have had successful outcomes for 96.6% of them. Our numbers are slightly down from a year ago but I think that reflects on all the spay and neutering that the shelter and clinics are doing. We are also very proud of the work on behalf of the senior pets. Our social media efforts and your word of mouth helped our senior dogs Kuma, Magnum, Chocco and Shadow find wonderful, loving forever homes. We have also found our senior cats Bo Derik and Matilda’s soulmates. These old gals will live their senior years in comfort. That is heartwarming and rewarding for us.

Our heartfelt thanks to so many of you who do so much to make the lives of the beautiful animals who pass through Stafford Animal Shelter safer, happier and healthier. -- Steve Leach, Executive Director
Supporters allow the Shelter to keep our doors open to all pets in need, serve them without delay, and quickly place them in homes. A very big THANK YOU to:

Adkins, Lorretta and Raymond
Aebbers, Goedele
Alexander, Archibald & Eleanor
Alich, Bonnie
American Foundation
Ams, Vince & Mary
Anderson, Carl A
Angel, Laurel
Armstrong, Betsy
Art, Andy
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Kooser, Theodore
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Lalani, S.M. & C.G.
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Lawson, Katrina B.
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Moody, Catherine
Morgan, David
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Nelson, Lezlie
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Newman, C. Walter and Rosemary K.
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Nichols, John & Kathleen
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Olson, Rodney and Marcia
Onstott, Donna & Jim
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Paoli, Fred and Anita
Peet, Charles & Margaret
Perkins, Gabryelle
Petcio
Phinny, Molly L
Potter, Katherine
Proudfoot, Tom & Mary Beth
Pulis, Dwight and Susan
Quinton, Beverly & Robert
Rahn-Gibson, Sandy
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Richardson, Sharon
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Versland, Dr. Tena
Wade, Kelly
Wahl, Susan
Ward, Margaret & Peter
Warden, Bill
Watson, Georgann
Weamer, Lisa
Welch, Jeff
Wentz, Lorraine
West, Karrie
West, Kimberly
White, Diana
Whiteside, Christine
Whitmore, Ryan
Whitmore, Mardella
Wilcoxon’s Ice Cream
William & Flora Hewett Foundation
Williams, Barbara
Williams, Ian
Wistey, Chad and Julimarie
Woods, Ron
Wunsch, Regina
Zinker, Pauline and Oswald, Brant
Zivkovic, Nicholas
Living in our beautiful state of Montana, many of us, people and pets, have come across a rattlesnake at some point. While we know to give them a wide berth, sometimes our dogs, cats, or even horses get a little too curious, which is why some veterinarians and owners will opt for a preventative rattlesnake vaccination.

The rattlesnake vaccine was developed to protect dogs and horses from venom produced by the Western Diamondback Rattlesnake (Crotalus atrox), which lives in the Southwestern United States and Mexico. Here, in Montana, our only venomous rattler is the Western (or Prairie) Rattlesnake (Crotalus viridis), whose venom is similar enough to the Western Diamondback, that it should provide comparable levels of protection. There have not been many studies done on the vaccine, and it remains conditionally licensed, so much of our information on its efficacy is anecdotal. But there are considerations owners should be aware of when their animal is at risk of coming into contact with a rattlesnake.

The vaccine is currently only labeled for dogs and horses, however, has been used in cats and llamas, and some veterinarians may consider administering it to these species on a case-by-case basis. While it may reduce local tissue swelling and damage if an animal is bitten, any rattlesnake bite is a medical emergency. The hope is that the vaccine will reduce risk of permanent injury (and the company’s studies as well as studies in other species support this claim), but it is not a comprehensive preventative for a snake bite – as even a non-venomous bite can lead to an infection or tissue damage requiring veterinary care.

Finally, the vaccine is labeled for use every year, and some veterinarians will booster every 6 months, depending on likelihood of exposure. As with any vaccine, there is a risk of reaction to the shot, most commonly local swelling that itself can require veterinary treatment, and very rarely anaphylaxis.

We at Stafford do not provide this vaccine for our dog and cat residents because of the extremely low risk for a rattlesnake bite in our facility. However, we encourage our adopters to discuss the vaccine with their veterinarian if they are concerned that their pet’s lifestyle and activities may increase the chance of a rattlesnake encounter.

Shelter staffer Yvonne Venturino pulled into her driveway one evening and instantly knew something was wrong. 5 of her cats were gathering in a circle and appeared to be watching something. As she approached the group, she saw her Siamese foster cat Cirrus in the center with a Rattlesnake between his paws. The snake was deceased and Cirrus seemed to be showing it off to his feline friends. Yvonne quickly noticed Cirrus’ eye was bruised and his face was swollen so she scooped him up and raced him to the emergency vet clinic. Luckily for Cirrus, he was bit by what is referred to as a “dry bite” and very little poisonous venom had entered his bloodstream. Yvonne quickly noticed Cirrus’ eye was bruised and his face was swollen so she scooped him up and raced him to the emergency vet clinic. Luckily for Cirrus, he was bit by what is referred to as a “dry bite” and very little poisonous venom had entered his bloodstream. Had he been bit with the venom, he most likely would not have survived the car ride to Bozeman. Cirrus is recovering very well and has returned to live in his foster home with Yvonne and her husband Duke until we can find him a forever home. This strong cat does not thrive in the Shelter environment, but clearly he’s tough enough to take on the wild Montana elements!

In another scary rattlesnake incident, beloved Livingston Police Department K9 Officer Bobi was bit near his home in the city that he shares with handler & partner, Officer Andrew Emanuel. When Bobi instantly swelled up and bruised Officer Emanuel knew it was a bite. Bobi did not have the vaccination but thankfully he was only minutes away from Dr. McCormick’s office and he was able to be saved as well. Bobi is a mentally & physically tough dog and he is already back on the job. Emanuel says, “We have had broken teeth, broken toes, broken toenails, skunk sprays, and various other injuries. This one was among the scariest”. In hopes of bringing awareness to other pet owners Emanuel shared how this incident changed him, “After the bite, I have been more cognizant of our surroundings from the dog’s point of view. Whether it be deployments, training, or even going for a walk, it has changed my mindset on what is around us. We will be getting the vaccine going forward as well”.

A happy ending for both Bobi and Cirrus!
Our Black & White Fur Ball was a smashing success, raising more money than ever before! We could have not asked for a better night with a black and white themed menu by our wonderful sponsor Chico Hot Springs Resort & Day Spa, music by Someday Miss Pray, auction by JimBo Logan and all the wonderful donors, guests and volunteers who made it a magical night! In addition to raising the much needed funds to operate the shelter, we had several donors sponsor our new “Rescue Ride” van and our new “Cat Condos”. We are so grateful for the generosity of our community for purchasing them for us.

The whole community pitches in to help raise money for the animals and we could not do it without their time, donations and support. Please be sure to thank them next time you see them!


Special thanks to Hartmann Signs for donating and installing the decals on our van.

“Cat Condos” purchased by: Dyan Hoffman, Carrie Holder, Vicki Juhl, Don & Sandy Leal, Cat Moody and Angel & John Stark

Thank special thank you to the Stafford Staff, Chico Staff and the special volunteers who helped pull off this great event!

Volunteers: Andy Art, Eve Art, Rio Bell, Victoria Bell, Stephanie Cunningham, Sue Dailey, Bryan Dalpes, Nikki Fox, Peter Fox, Angie Froko, Lisa Hartmann, Don Hartmann, Vicki Juhl, Jeanne Knox, Rachel Luger, Natalie McGrath, Drew Myers, Debbie Nelson, Hannah Pauli, Vicki Regula, Kammie Roberts & Connie Ryan

Fur Ball sells out very quickly so if you are interested in attending next year, please email our Development Director at pr@staffordanimalshelter.org to reserve a spot for 2017!

Find us at the Farmer’s Market

The Shelter will be at the Livingston Farmer’s Market every Wednesday from 4:30 pm - 7:30 pm at Sacajewea Park. We’re selling Wilcoxson’s Ice Cream as well as bottled water and soda all to benefit the Shelter. Ice Cream is $2 and drinks are $1. We also have a special deal on our tote bags, perfect for farmer’s market shopping, at 2 for $5. Stop by and say hello and cool off with an ice cream or drink to help the Shelter’s animals. Ice cream and drinks are also available for purchase at the Shelter, too! A special THANK YOU to Wilcoxson’s for donating a freezer to the Shelter!

New Summer Hours! Open Sundays! Noon - 5:00

New hours at the Shelter: Wednesdays - Sundays, 12pm to 5pm

Closed Mondays & Tuesdays, except for strays and emergencies

We look forward to your visit!
Behavioral management practices are as important in providing shelter animals with superlative care as the veterinary attention they receive. Animal training and enrichment must be integrated into a pet’s daily routine and environment in order to maintain mental and emotional stability throughout the duration of their stay at a shelter. Our mission at Stafford Animal Shelter is to provide a safe, comfortable, and enriching environment for the pets that come through our doors. To fulfill our mission, we are constantly evolving our environment and routines to accommodate our pets’ specific emotional needs. Changes are as diminutive as replacing an animal’s bedding, and as major as our recent barn renovation that proliferated our current animal occupancy.

In July we made substantial changes to the environment in which our adoptable dogs are housed. Our objective was to mitigate contagious and obsessive barking between dogs in neighboring kennels. Essentially, we aimed to reduce stress in our entire animal population by quieting our dog kennel.

We rearranged outdoor kennels, and installed porous nylon visual barriers to eliminate visual access between neighboring kennels. By eliminating visual access between neighboring dogs, we reduced vocal reactivity considerably. Prior to our renovation, the sound pressure level was measured in our outdoor kennels with dogs present. The level ranged from 85 to 95 decibels (or dB), and peaked at 110 dB. Sustained exposure to levels between 90 dB and 95 dB is loud enough to cause hearing damage in humans. Following our outdoor kennel renovation, the sound pressure level had dropped substantially. Our current outdoor kennel sound pressure levels range between 55 dB and 65 dB, with a peak of 80 dB.

Since reactivity has fallen in our kennels, dogs have been easier to introduce to each other. They are able to interact with other dogs with less intensity and anxiety. Playgroups and group housing are accomplished daily when staff are present. Playgroups are paramount in allowing shelter dogs to hone their social skills with unfamiliar dogs. Dogs are also far more efficient at wearing each other out than humans are.

In addition to playgroups and our outdoor kennel renovation, we introduced interactive feeding puzzles. We offer rolling kibble puzzles, and dangle frozen kibble popsicles in our dogs’ kennels as an alternative to conventional bowl feeding. This feeding practice provides dogs with an activity that slows their food consumption while awakening the cognitive portion of their brain at the same time.

Stafford Animal Shelter’s top-notch care is possible thanks to the collaborative energy of our community, staff, and volunteers. Our combined efforts will continue to keep our facility cutting edge so that we can provide our communities’ homeless pets with the best care possible prior to being united with their new families.

A special THANK YOU to volunteer and Shelter supporter Ramona Lauda for sponsoring the adoption of our long-stay black cats. 5 of the cats are now in loving homes, and our remaining black cats are patiently waiting to find that special someone to take them home. Come in and meet these loving cats today!

Thank you Ramona!

Congratulations to 2 of our senior long stay cats, Bo Derik and Matilda, who both found their forever homes recently. Their adoptions were sponsored by John and Angel Stark, Shelter supporters who have a special place in their hearts for our hard to place cats. THANK YOU, John and Angel! And BEST WISHES to Bo Derik and Matilda!
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Top 10 reasons why partnering with our shelter is good for your business!

1. 80 million homes own a pet and spend $61 billion dollars annually.
2. In Park County 65% of homes have pets.
3. Stafford has 15,000+ visitors annually in the shelter and at our events & fundraisers.
4. Our Facebook page has 2,500 hits per day.
5. Our website has 500 hits a day. Your logo and link could benefit from this traffic.
6. Your company connects with Stafford’s fans.
7. Your employee morale is raised knowing their workplace saves animals’ lives.
8. Our “Pet Patron” logo could appear on your website and in your storefront advertising that you support the shelter.
9. Your logo is front and center at our fundraising events, on our website and on our newsletter with a circulation of 3,000 distributed 3 times a year.
10. Your standing in the community is enhanced by potential customers identifying with your contribution to animal welfare.

We asked each staff member: “How many animals have you had so far in your life?”

Yvonne, Photographer/Special Projects: 87
Susan, Animal Care: 33 + 8 foster
Alicia, Development Director: 10 + fosters
Gwen, Front Desk Manager: 100
Steve, Executive Director: countless
Kylee, Vet Tech: 8
Cameshia, Animal Care: 24
Peggy, Front Desk/Animal Care: 56
Rachel, Animal Care: 24
Nick, Animal Care Supervisor: 9
Alyson, Grants/Admin: 5
Tony, Animal Care: 2
Charles, Facility Manager:
Morgan, Animal Care: 11

Meet the Staff

Pictured from left to right: Yvonne Venturino, Susan Tiftick, Alicia Davis, Gwen Strachan, Steve Leach, Kylee Jeffers, Cameshia Mitchell, Rachel Flury, Peggy Weisgerber, Nick Radovich, Alyson Kleine, Tony Marcuzzo, Charles Worth. not pictured: Morgan Elmore
Consider stylish license plates for your car. These raise a significant amount of funds to feed our animals every year and can be purchased any time, regardless of your license plate renewal date, and are available statewide.