



# COLORADO WOLF & WILDLIFE CENTER

MARCH 2025 · CONSERVATION · EDUCATION · PRESERVATION



## TALA'S Sweet 16

*To celebrate Tala's 16th birthday, caretakers Annie and Carissa took her on a long "choose your own adventure" walk around the center and property.*



CERTIFIED BY THE  
**ASSOCIATION  
OF ZOOS &  
AQUARIUMS**

## The Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center

is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization certified by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA). Look for this logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things.

The contents of the material we include in our newsletter does not necessarily reflect the views of CWWC. We collect information from other organizations, the web, news feeds, and/or other sources. We choose articles that are in the related field of education and conservation.









TO SUBSCRIBE to our monthly newsletter, go to [wolfeducation.org](http://wolfeducation.org) and sign up on the newsletter page.

### CONTACT US

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PO Box 713 Divide, CO  
80814 719.687.9742

## | SOCIAL MEDIA HAPPENINGS |

Stay up to date with the animals at CWWC, wolves and wildlife in the news, and advocacy opportunities.

-  **Subscribe to our YouTube Channel: ColoradoWolf&WildlifeCenter** We post videos of the training and enrichment we are providing for our animals, and educational vlogs about wolves.
-  **Follow us on Facebook: Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center** to get updates on new YouTube video postings, read feel good stories from other wolf/wildlife organizations, and learn about new wildlife findings in the research field.
-  **Follow us on Instagram: @cowolfcenter** to see pictures of our beautiful animals, stories of what we are doing around the center, and ways you can help wild wolf populations. Keep your eye on our story for fun videos of the day to day lives of our wolves and keepers.
-  **CWWC is now on Bluesky! Follow us: @cowolfcenter.bsky.social**
-  **Follow us on Twitter: @Wolves\_at\_CWWC** to see photos of our animals, read fun facts, and hear about events happening at CWWC.
-  **Follow us on TikTok: @cowolfcenter** for the videos you won't see on our other social media pages.

*We hope to give you something to look forward to every day!*



Casey, my beloved dog, was not only my heart and soul but also my constant companion during the veterinary clinics I organized in Costa Rica. After years of tireless effort coordinating these clinics while managing the Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center, I found myself utterly exhausted. I reached a point where I felt I could no longer continue.

During what I thought would be my final trip to Costa Rica, Casey fell ill. A bilingual veterinarian in Jacó, Dr. Sarah, treated her. As we talked about my journey and the challenges of my mission, she offered her support in continuing this vital work. Thanks to Dr. Sarah, and my unwavering love for Casey, I found new energy to continue. Without Casey, I might have given up entirely, but her presence reinvigorated my purpose.

After Casey passed away a few years later, I founded Casey's Project in her honor. This initiative serves as a heartfelt tribute to her legacy, continuing the work that meant so much to both of us.

This April, Kelly joined me at a spay/neuter clinic. It was her first time experiencing the program firsthand, and it left a profound impact. Kelly observed the dedication and effort required to provide veterinary care in underserved areas, participating not only in MASH-style procedures, but also in the critical aftercare phase. She played an active role in helping animals recover.

Our work addresses urgent issues such as pet overpopulation and provides care for animals with medical needs that would otherwise go unmet. Preventive measures, like flea and tick treatments, are an essential part of these efforts. For instance, they help combat Ehrlichia, a tick-borne disease carried by brown ticks, which is prevalent in Costa Rica and many other parts of the world, including Europe, Africa, and the Americas. It can be lethal if not treated.

Each clinic serves as a testament to the transformative impact we can make—not just for individual animals but for their communities as well.

To date, Casey's Project has cared for over 500 dogs and cats. Considering that one dog can produce 30 to 45 puppies in her lifetime and a cat can produce 100 or more kittens, the ripple effect of addressing overpopulation is profound. Left unchecked, overpopulation leads to the starvation and death of countless animals, with some resorting to preying on native wildlife to survive.

At Casey's Project, we are proud to be making a difference—one animal, one clinic, and one community at a time.



# 'Don't call it zombie deer disease': scientists warn of 'global crisis' as infections spread across the US

The contagious, fatal illness in deer, elk and moose must be taken seriously, say experts as it takes hold in the US and reaches other countries. While it has not infected humans yet, the risk is growing

Todd Wilkinson | The Guardian | March 20, 2025



Photo: NPS  
A bull elk with late-stage chronic wasting disease, which is always fatal and has no cure, in Wind Cave national park, South Dakota, US.

In a scattershot pattern that now extends from coast to coast, continental US states have been announcing new hotspots of chronic wasting disease (CWD).

The contagious and always-fatal neurodegenerative disorder infects the cervid family that includes deer, elk, moose and, in higher latitudes, reindeer. There is no vaccine or treatment.

Described by scientists as a "slow-motion disaster in the making", the infection's presence in the wild began quietly, with a few free-ranging deer in Colorado and Wyoming in 1981. However, it has now reached wild and domestic game animal herds in 36 US states as well as parts of Canada, wild and domestic reindeer in Scandinavia and farmed deer and elk in South Korea.

In the media, CWD is often called "zombie deer disease" due to its symptoms, which include drooling, emaciation,

disorientation, a vacant "staring" gaze and a lack of fear of people. As concerns about spillover to humans or other species grow, however, the moniker has irritated many scientists.

"It trivialises what we're facing," says epidemiologist Michael Osterholm. "It leaves readers with the false impression that this is nothing more than some strange fictional menace you'd find in the plot of a sci-fi film. Animals that get infected with CWD do not come back from the dead. CWD is a deathly serious public and wildlife health issue."

Five years ago, Osterholm, the director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, delivered what he hoped would be a wake-up call before the Minnesota legislature, warning about "spillover" of CWD transmission from infected deer to

humans eating game meat. Back then, some portrayed him as a scaremonger.

Today, as CWD spreads inexorably to more deer and elk, more people – probably tens of thousands each year – are consuming infected venison, and a growing number of scientists are echoing Osterholm's concerns.

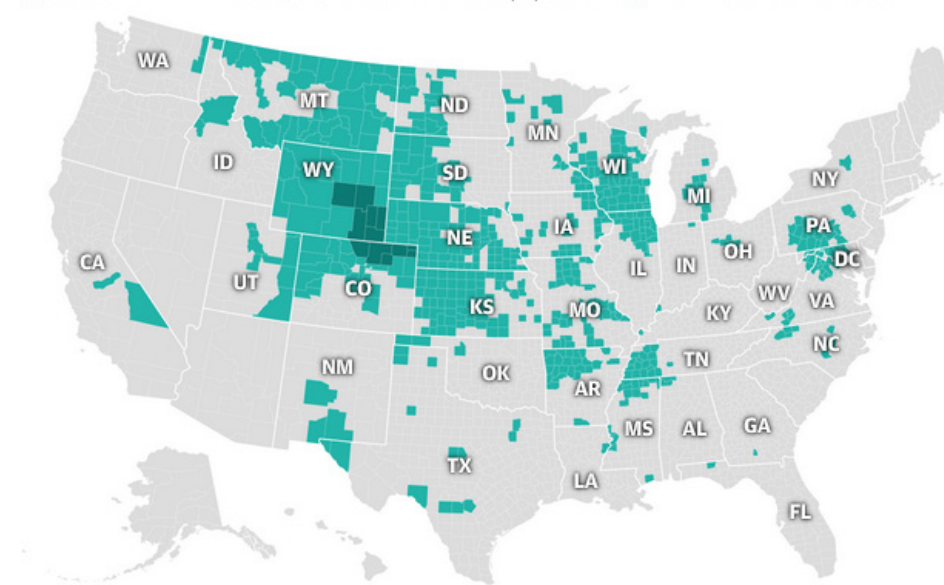
In January 2025, researchers published a report, Chronic Wasting Disease Spillover Preparedness and Response: Charting an Uncertain Future. A panel of 67 experts who study zoonotic diseases that can move back and forth between humans and animals concluded that spillover to humans "would trigger a national and global crisis" with "far-reaching effects on the food supply, economy, global trade and agriculture", as well as potentially devastating effects on human health. The report concludes that the US is utterly unprepared to deal with spillover of CWD to people, and that there is no unifying international strategy to prevent CWD's spread.

So far, there has not been a documented case of a human contracting CWD, but as with BSE (or mad cow disease) and its variant strain that killed people, long incubation times can mask the presence of disease. CWD, which is incurable, can be diagnosed only after a victim dies. Better surveillance to identify disease in people and game animals is more urgent than ever, experts say. Osterholm says the Trump administration's proposed cuts to public health funding and research, and the US's withdrawal from international institutions, such as the World Health Organization, could not be happening at a worse time.

The risk of a CWD spillover event is growing, the panel

## Chronic wasting disease has been detected in 36 US states

■ Cases of CWD in wild deer, elk, moose and reindeer populations ■ Known cases before 2000



Guardian graphic. Source: USGS. Note: reported cases by county 2000 to 2025

of experts say, and the risk is higher in states where big game hunting for the table remains a tradition. In a survey of US residents by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 20% said they had hunted deer or elk, and more than 60% said they had eaten venison or elk meat.

Tens of thousands of people are probably eating contaminated game meat either because they do not think they are at risk or they are unaware of the threat. "Hunters sharing their venison with other families is a widespread practice," Osterholm says. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises people who suspect they have killed an animal infected with CWD not to eat it, and states advise any hunters taking animals from infected regions to get them tested. Many, however, do not.

The movement of meat around the country also raises concerns of environmental contamination. CWD is not caused by bacteria or a virus, but by "prions": abnormal, transmissible pathogenic agents that are difficult to destroy. Prions have demonstrated an ability to remain activated in soils for many years, infecting animals that come in contact with contaminated areas where they have been shed via urination, defecation, saliva and decomposition when an animal dies. Analysis by the US Geological Survey has shown that numerous carcasses of hunted animals, many probably contaminated with CWD, are transported across state lines, accelerating the scope of prion dispersal.

In states where many thousands of deer and elk carcasses are disposed of, some in landfill, there is concern among epidemiologists and local public health officials that toxic waste sites for prions could be created.

Every autumn, Lloyd Dorsey has hunted elk and deer to put meat on the table, but now he is concerned about its safety. "Since CWD is now in elk and deer throughout Greater Yellowstone, the disease is on everybody's mind," he says. Dorsey has spent decades as a professional conservationist for the Sierra Club, based in Jackson Hole in Wyoming, and he has pressed the state and federal governments to shut down feedgrounds for deer – where cervids

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gather and disease can easily spread.

“Wyoming has wilfully chosen to ignore conservationists, scientists, disease experts and prominent wildlife managers who were all saying the same thing: stop the feeding,” he says.

Apart from the grave concerns about CWD reaching people, scientists describe it as “an existential threat” to wild cervid populations, which are central to American hunting traditions. Nowhere is there more at stake than in the region surrounding the country’s most famous nature preserve, Yellowstone.

A new study that tracked 1,000 adult white-tailed



CWD has been detected in the National Elk Refuge in Yellowstone national park, where thousands of elk gather. *Photograph: USFWS*

One of the largest feedgrounds is operated by the federal government: the National Elk Refuge, where more than 8,000 elk cluster, and CWD has already been detected. Tom Roffe, former chief of animal health for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the refuge, and Bruce Smith, a former refuge senior biologist, have said Wyoming has created ripe conditions for an outbreak of the disease, with consequences that will negatively ripple throughout the region.

“This has been a slowly expanding epidemic with a growth curve playing out on a decades scale, but now we’re seeing the deepening consequences and they could be severe,” Roffe says. “Unfortunately, what’s happening with this disease was predictable and we’re living with the consequences of some decisions that were rooted in denial.”

Roffe and others say the best defence is having healthy landscapes where unnatural feeding of wildlife is unnecessary and where predators are not eliminated but allowed to carry out their role of eliminating sick animals.

“As Yellowstone has been for generations, it is the most amazing and best place to get wildlife conservation right,” Dorsey says. “It would be such a shame if we continued doing something as foolish as concentrating thousands of elk and deer, making them more vulnerable to catching and spreading this catastrophic disease, when we didn’t have to.”



A sign in Montana warns of CWD in an attempt to prevent its spread via animal carcasses. *Photograph: Courtesy of Montana Wildlife Federation*

deer and fawns in south-west Wisconsin mirrors what research elsewhere suggests: over time infected animals die at rates that outpace natural reproduction, meaning some populations could disappear. No animals have demonstrated immunity to CWD and there is no vaccine.

If depopulating herds becomes necessary to reduce disease presence, it could have devastating consequences for people who rely on those animals and who have a connection to them.

Studies show that having healthy wild carnivores on a landscape can help weed out sick CWD-carrying elk and deer, but states in the northern Rockies have adopted policies aimed at dramatically reducing wolves, bears and mountain lions.

Other policies continue to contradict scientific advice. Wyoming has attracted national criticism for refusing to shutter nearly two dozen feedgrounds where tens of thousands of elk and deer gather in close confines every winter and are fed artificial forage to bolster their numbers.

# Around the Center



**TOP LEFT:** How do you know you have a barn cat?



**TOP RIGHT:** Shamba screaming “thank you for donating treats!”



**BOTTOM:** Coco did not find enrichment up to her standards this week.





# Areas where coyote-hunting is legal have more coyotes, research shows

The most significant population declines occurred in the southwestern region, which includes Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Scripps News Group | March 8, 2025



Photo by: Nic Coury / AP

The population of butterflies in the U.S. is declining at a concerning rate, according to new research published in the journal Science.

The overall number of the vital pollinators has decreased by more than a fifth this century, the scientists said, raising concerns about long-term impacts.

The most significant population declines occurred in the southwestern region, which includes Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

While butterflies have been the focus of extensive study, most analyses have either been limited in geographic scope or drawn from a single monitoring program. In a significant effort to address this gap, researchers analyzed data from over 12.6 million

individual butterflies collected from more than 76,000 surveys across 35 monitoring programs.

Their findings indicate a troubling trend: between 2000 and 2020, total butterfly abundance across the contiguous United States dropped by 22% among the 554 species recorded.

The decline was widespread, with 13 times as many species experiencing decreases in population as those that saw increases.

This pervasive trend across all regions underscores the urgent need for protective measures to prevent further losses of butterfly populations.

Scientists said factors including habitat loss, pesticide use and climate change have led to the decline.



Zak living his best life

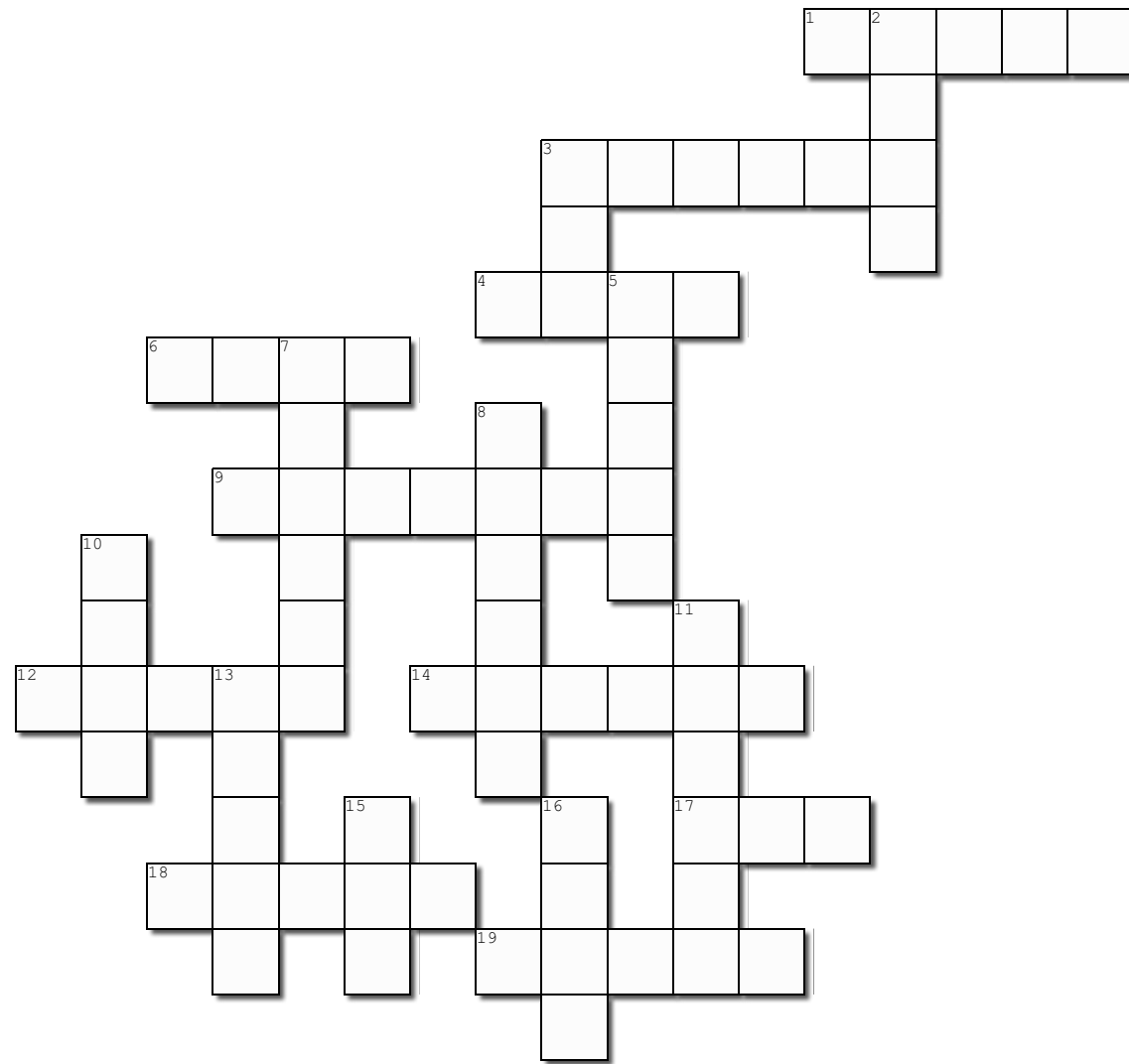


A pair of mergansers; one with a crawdad. Along the South Platte River – Littleton, CO



## Animal Sounds Crossword

What sound does each of these animals make? For example a dog will BARK. Write the sound in the crossword below!



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

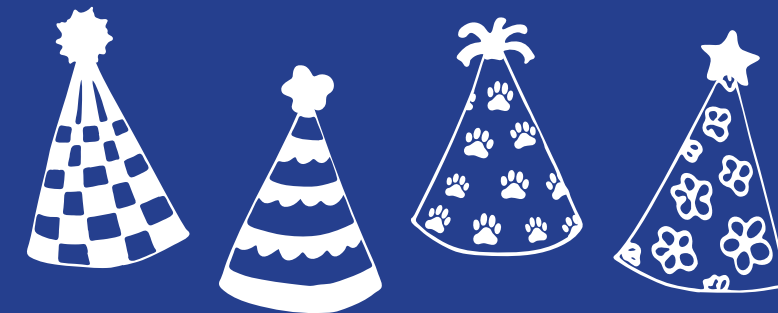
### Across

- 1. Chick (5)
- 3. Cuckoo (6)
- 4. Goose (4)
- 6. Snake (4)
- 9. Bees (7)
- 12. Duck (5)
- 14. Deer (especially the male Stag) (6)
- 17. Sheep (3)
- 18. Toad (5)
- 19. Songbird (5)

### Down

- 2. Owl (4)
- 3. Pigeon (3)
- 5. Horse (5)
- 7. Mouse (6)
- 8. Frog (6)
- 10. Fish (4)
- 11. Turkey (6)
- 13. Cricket or grasshopper (5)
- 15. Crow (3)
- 16. Wolf (4)

# Birthday CELEBRATIONS



Be sure to help us celebrate the many birthdays of our animals.

**An entire week starting the  
3rd week in April!**

Watch them unwrap their birthday presents and celebrate with their favorite food.

Limited Space, so call early.

**wolfeducation.org | 719.687.9742**

# MOTHER'S DAY

## *With the Wolves*

Sunday,  
May 11th  
9-11am

Wolf Tour,  
A Flower for Moms  
and Snacks



Adults \$40 (12+)

Kids \$20 (6-11)

PREPAY EVENT

RESERVATIONS

719.687.9742

Colorado Wolf  
and Wildlife Center

[wolfeducation.org](http://wolfeducation.org)





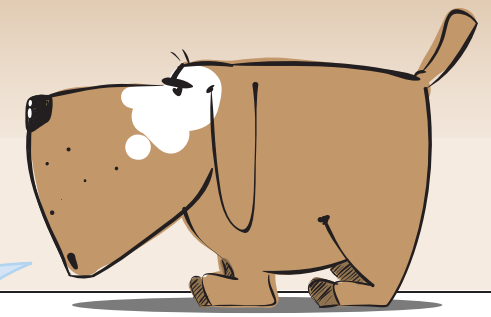
# Adoption corner

## TCRAS

Teller County Regional Animal Shelter  
tcrascolorado.org · 719.686.7707

## SLVAWS

San Luis Valley Animal Welfare Society  
slvaws.org · 719.587.woof (9663)



[ NOTE - Our shelter is still open for adoptions, but we are asking that you call ahead and make an appointment before coming in to the shelter - 719-686-7707. ]

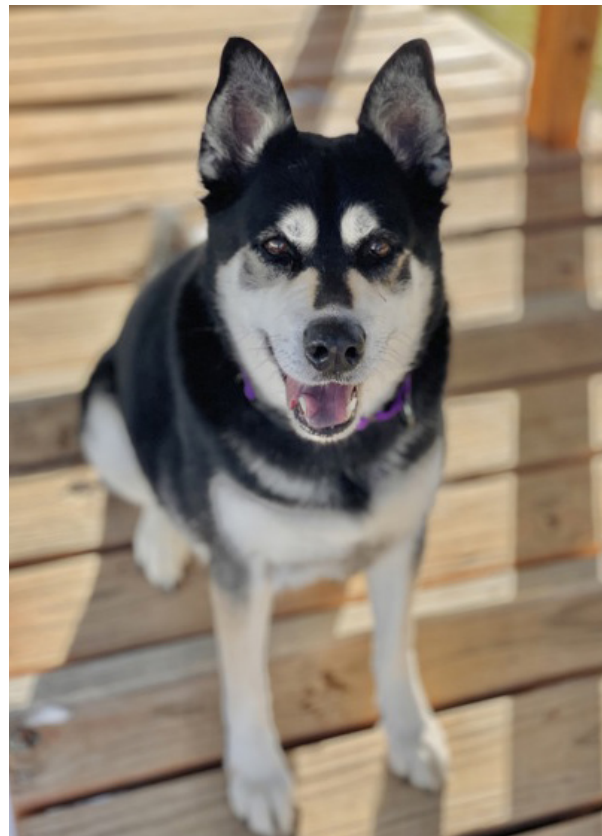
### KORRA »

Hi! My name is Korra. I'm a very shy, quiet girl. If you gently pet me, I'll lean into your hand and purr. I would love a quiet home where I can keep coming out of my shell. Will you be my new family?



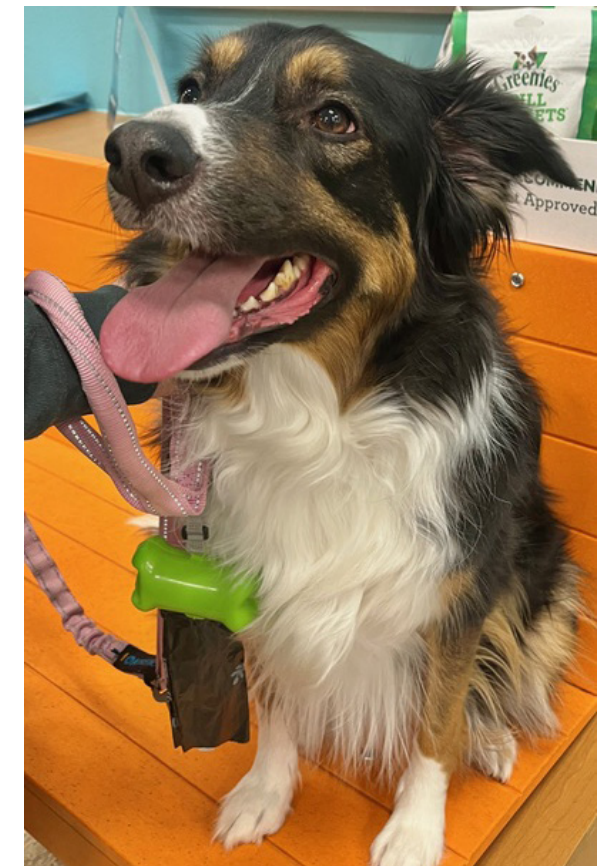
### « LIZZIE

Hello new friend! My name is Lizzie. I'm a big, fluffy, and friendly girl. I just want to be with my people and get loved! I do love food and treats a little too much, as I am a hefty gal. I would love a family who can provide me with regular exercise so I can work my way back to a healthy weight!



### NOODLE »

Noodle is a very loving border collie/aussie ~ 3 1/2 years old. Very smart, learns quickly, runs very fast, loves to play ball. Her breed needs lots of exercise and mental stimulation. Okay around children but sometimes anxious around them. Knows commands. Spayed, all vacc's. Surrendered by a single mom with a baby.



### « FANNY

Fanny is a 3-year-old Anatolian/hound mix. Prefers to play with larger dogs. Good with other dogs. Affectionate. Loves the outdoors. Spayed, all vacc's, chipped.

SLVAWS  
Please check our website, [www.slvaws.org](http://www.slvaws.org) for our next adoption fair in Colorado Springs, every Saturday 10am-3pm.