

Homeless Dogs Benefit From Media Glare

One Golden Retriever's story illustrates how homeless animals can benefit from media attention.

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Oleander's story was nightly fodder for Southern California newscasts. Residents were riveted by the plight of the Golden Retriever, who spent two months evading capture while living on a six-mile stretch of a Riverside County freeway.

When the dog, nicknamed Oleander for her penchant for weaving in and out of oleanders along the freeway's median despite a broken leg, was finally captured, Riverside County shelter services received 90 phone calls about the 3-year-old dog.

"Getting an animal on television is a guaranteed adoption," says Ed Boks, the general manager of the Los Angeles Department of Animal Services, in an interview with the Los Angeles Times. "I think it has to do, perhaps, with an affinity with fame. A lot of folks want to touch that celebrity status through adopting the animal that everyone now wants."

Jeff Blodgett, a spokesperson for the SPCA, says some people become motivated to adopt only after they know an animal's story.

"What grabs the most attention and brings awareness to pet adoptions are the cruelty cases," Blodgett says. Dogs who languished at a shelter for months can prompt as many as 150 calls after appearing in the media, he says. "A dog or cat that has been abused generates a lot of sympathy."

Oleander's two-month ordeal will soon come to a close – her owners were one of the calls that poured in, and they are expected to be reunited this week.