



### Ponce's Happy Ending - June, 2009 Lost Dog Found upon a Star

Maybe he was just trying to live up to his name, but the little terrier "Ponce" (like the explorer Ponce De Leon), surprised everyone when he was miraculously found and returned home safely after being lost for over five months in central Texas.

Ponce went missing after he and his brother chased after a rabbit while visiting the family ranch in Adamsville, Texas. It was January 19, 2009, his 8th birthday. His brother came back when called, but Ponce kept going through an open gate and into a world very foreign to a timid city dog. His family searched for days and posted signs and fliers, but there was no response. How could he just vanish? After a week passed, owners Kim Saxon and John Davis from Dallas hired a search dog team, Dog Gone Detectives, to help. The team tracked Ponce several miles to FM 581. "We assumed someone picked him up at that point and hoped they would call us," said Kim. "After several weeks, we started to think someone decided to keep Ponce, or didn't know that we were looking for him."

A couple of months passed. "I couldn't give up because I really felt Ponce was out there somewhere, so I decided to place ads in newspapers." Lost dog ads ran in area papers, including the Lampasas Dispatch Record. As soon as the ad ran in Lampasas, Kim received a response from Dean and Sharon Watson. Lampasas County road workers in Adamsville had just seen a dog a couple of times that looked like Ponce, and said he was heading north. Kim spent a few days searching in Adamsville without success, so she ran an ad in another paper, the Evant Star. By now, Ponce had been missing over 3 months. Meta and David Henry of Star thought the picture in the ad looked a lot like recent photos of a dog that appeared on one of their trail cameras. Meta sent Kim an email that read "Could this be Ponce?" and attached photos. As soon as Kim and John saw the pictures they knew it was Ponce. He had traveled about 20 miles but looked to be in pretty good shape. Kim immediately posted fliers and signs in Star and talked to as many people as possible trying to narrow down Ponce's location. Kay Sutherland, Star's Postmaster, was instrumental during the search, and the post office became base headquarters. The search dog team arrived to track Ponce again, but the task was difficult because he left so many scent trails. On the positive side, fresh trails meant Ponce was still in the immediate area.

Soon there were several sightings of Ponce in Star. A mail carrier spotted him and workers on a farm saw him several times. Meta continued to put dog food out by the trail cameras hoping to get another photo of Ponce, and in early June it worked...he was caught on camera! His crate had been left nearby to provide a familiar scent and more items followed, including his favorite food, carrots. A few days passed and Ponce showed up again. During this same time, workers next door at McCasland Farms saw him sleeping in the barn two nights in a row. Ponce would not come to them and after

days of searching the area without success, it seemed the only way to catch him was with a humane cage trap.

Lampasas County Animal Control Officer Kasey Dressel, and Shirl Wangler, who runs the Lampasas County Animal Intake Shelter, had been following the search since January and let Kim borrow a trap, which was placed at the barn at McCasland Farms and monitored with the help of the workers. After a few days, Kim received a call from the ranch supervisor, William Tidwell, who said "I've got a little dog here for you." June 28th Kim finally got the call she'd been anticipating for over five months.

Ponce recognized Kim and John instantly and squealed with delight when they asked if he was ready to go home. He had lots of fleas and was hungrier than usual, but considering his adventure, was in great shape, and acted like his old self once reunited with his family. Ponce survived an ice storm, a flood, thunderstorms, and temperatures ranging from 17° F to over 100° F. For Ponce, Star, Texas provided a perfect place to settle down, with a nice big creek, huge shady pecan trees, plenty of easy game like mice, and the possibility of easy pickings stealing from food bowls of local cats.

"It's interesting how one event led to another to create this happy ending," said Kim. "It might not have happened if the timing had been different." Indeed, the search dog team gave Kim hope which caused her to eventually place ads in newspapers. The Lampasas Dispatch ad led to sightings in Adamsville. Those sightings led to an ad in the Evant Star, which caused Meta to contact Kim. If the ads had run earlier it would have been too soon and Ponce wouldn't have shown up on the camera. "We are so thankful for all the help by animal lovers in Star, Adamsville, Evant, and Lampasas," says Kim. "We never would have found Ponce without them." It certainly gives "Wishing upon a Star" a whole new meaning."

LostDogSearch was first contacted by Kim via email on June 17th. Further emails and phone calls discussed ongoing search efforts and the use of cage traps. On June 28th Kim called me to say she'd just got word Ponce was caught in the cage trap at the farm. That good news really made my day! Thank you, Kim for calling and for sharing Ponce's happy ending story.