

# K-9s get bulletproof vests

## Nonprofit helps dogs get needed body armor

By Louie Gilot

El Paso Times

Brix, a 4-year-old German shepherd with the El Paso County Sheriff's Office, has a deputy's badge dangling from his collar.

But when it came to body armor, he has had nothing more than his pelt for protection.

Thursday, Brix was one of six local police dogs to receive a K-9 bulletproof and stab-proof vest from a nonprofit organization.

Brix's handler, Deputy Federico Castillo, said the new vest would make the dog less vulnerable when tracking suspects.

"It would be perfect for building searches," he said. "We just let the dog loose. We don't know what's there."

The vests went to Brix and Quattro from the Sheriff's Office, to Fox and Kondor from the Sunland Park Police Department and to Linda and Rugby, from the Anthony (Texas) Police Department.

The vests, worth \$700 each, were donated by Vest 'N P.D.P.

Susie Jean, the group's founder, collects donations from people and businesses and fills orders that law enforcement agencies place for the vests through her Web site.

"All the money goes to the vests. When I get \$700, I order a vest," she said.

Since she started in 2002, Jean has given 110 vests to police dogs in 11 states, she said.

Anthony Police Chief Ed Miranda said Jean's help is invaluable.

"Being from a small agency, it's hard to outfit the dogs properly," he said.

El Paso County sheriff's Chief Deputy Jimmy Apodaca Jr. said that Brix and Quattro would wear the vests "most of the time," and that the office would look for ways to outfit their other two dogs. Each vest is fitted to a particular dog and weighs 2 to 4 pounds, Jean said.

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Victor Calzada / El Paso Times

Fox, a Sunland Park Police Department dog, showed affection for his handler, Officer

Gabriel Vega, who was fastening Fox's new bulletproof vest Thursday.