

Soledad animal hospital treats all creatures, great and small

'I like being in a smaller town. I get to bond with the clients.'

— Coral Armstrong,
owner of Los Coches Animal Hospital

Los Coches sees 'em all, from horses to household pets

By CHRISTOPHER ORTIZ
The Salinas Californian

Running an animal hospital carries many more challenges than merely working at one, but it's a responsibility veterinarian Coral Armstrong says she's glad she took on.

"I knew there was a lot to it, but I didn't know how much there was," said Armstrong, co-owner of Los Coches Animal Hospital in Soledad.

She bought the hospital with business partner and veterinary technician Carrie Askew in January 2004, after working at the site for 15 years. The hospital first opened in the 1950s and treats both large and small animals.

On a typical day, the hospital sees dozens of horses needing vaccinations and treats an assortment of household pets.

"There is a lot of variance in the animals we see — horses, cattle, dogs and cats," Armstrong said.

In addition to acting as a pet clinic, the hospital serves as Soledad's animal shelter. But growing demands may prevent it from offering those services soon, she said. The hospital can house up to 30 animals.

While business is growing, Armstrong said she enjoys the sense of community in Soledad.

"I like being in a smaller town. I get to bond with the clients," she said.

After growing up in the Soledad area, Armstrong graduated from Scripps College in Claremont and studied veteri-



RICHARD GREEN/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN

Coral Armstrong, veterinarian at Los Coches Animal Hospital in Soledad, examines Kono, a shepherd mix owned by Annette Uccelli.

LOS COCHES ANIMAL HOSPITAL

n **BUSINESS:** Hospital for large and small animals.

n **ESTABLISHED:** In the 1950s.

n **EMPLOYEES:** 11

n **ORGANIZATION:** Privately owned.

n **LOCATION:** 311 Nestle Road, Soledad.

n **INFORMATION:** 678-2658.

nary medicine at the University of California, Davis.

Working with animals, especially horses, was a lifelong goal.

"It was something I wanted to do since I was a kid," she said. "I really like working with horses. If you are a horse per-

son, you'll understand."

Though the hospital's patients have paws, hooves and tails, Armstrong said her veterinarians must have good skills working with the animals' two-legged owners.

"You're not going to be a good vet if you can't talk to people," she said.

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