

vets beyond borders

Improving animal welfare and public health in developing communities
ABN 55 994 410 532

CONTENTS

Introducing VBB New President Dr Anna Dean

VBB Project Updates

- Ladakh Project
- Sikkim Project
- Vet-Train Project

News

- VBB partners with Australian Youth Ambassador in Vietnam
- VBB supporting Indonesian veterinary training program

VBB Admin News

- Outgoing president
- New Project Manager for Sikkim
- Constitutional amendment
- Annual General Meeting

Stories from Volunteers



VBB President Dr Anna Dean



Congratulations Anna on your new role at the helm of VBB.

You bring impressive credentials to the Chair of VBB. You are an Australian veterinarian with a Masters degree in International Public Health and, by examination, a Member of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists, Epidemiology Chapter.

What set you on the path of veterinary public health so early in your career?

I really enjoy clinical practice and helping pets and their owners, but I began to feel that I wanted to do something with a wider impact. I became interested in global issues and, as I learned more, I realised the clear need for vets in the field of public health.

In 2006 you volunteered for VBB Sikkim Project.

Describe briefly the most memorable aspect of your experience there.

Some of the Indian vets with whom we were working in the Sikkim Anti-Rabies and Animal Welfare (SARAH) Program, took us to visit a Tibetan Buddhist monastery one weekend, which was really interesting, colourful and peaceful.

Clearly this ignited a passion for the work you were doing, as subsequently, you joined the VBB Veterinary Sub-Committee, became a Board member in 2007 and President of VBB in July 2009.

What motivates you to devote yourself to this career path?

The health and wellbeing of people, particularly in resource-poor settings, is closely linked to animal health and welfare. This is the key concept of veterinary public health. Simple cost-effective interventions such as vaccinating dogs against rabies can have such a positive impact on the local

community - so it's very easy to be motivated to continue this work! I also find working within other cultures and environments interesting and stimulating.

You have recently returned from Vietnam where you worked for the WHO as an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development. This is a great achievement and a wonderful opportunity to experience another culture.

What impact has this experience had on you, both personally and professionally?

Professionally, it was an amazing opportunity to work within the United Nations system and influence animal health policy at a national level.

Personally, I particularly enjoyed making friends with local people using my basic Vietnamese language skills - they really appreciated my effort to learn the language. I also enjoyed traveling across such a diverse country.

Anna, what does someone like you do to revitalize yourself after a tough day on the job?

I like to get outside and run, swim and cycle, but not all in one session!

You bring to the presidential role a wealth of knowledge and hands-on field experience. And you have some very big shoes to fill, following VBB founder and outgoing president Dr Catherine Schuetze.

What do you hope to achieve in your term as president?

I hope to see VBB continue to grow as an organisation and to engage more people with non-veterinary skills, as these people can provide very important and valuable contributions to our work. I'd also like to expand our reach to new projects and settings, broadening our activities.

Anna, your journey is a fascinating one. We wish you every success. Thank you.

LADAKH Street Dog Sterilisation Project

Sterilization Project Results

Winters are long and cold in Ladakh with heavy snowfalls and subzero temperatures to below minus 20C making project work impossible. The Ladakh Project season runs from June until the end of September each year.

- 780 dogs have been sterilised and vaccinated against rabies in June/July 2009. Surgical teams have been working up to 6 days a week to achieve these impressive results.
- A number of dogs have also been treated for various illnesses and injuries, including Transmissible Venereal Disease (TVT), urinary and respiratory tract diseases, and road trauma.

LACS Medicine Buddha

A Medicine Buddha has been completed at the Sabu Clinic after many months of work by a local sculptor/artist. This is a highly significant addition to the Clinic in a region where Buddhism plays a significant role in daily life.

Dog Rabies Vaccination and Education Sessions.

A series of rabies vaccination clinics for pet dogs have been held in local communities, predominantly Tibetan camps, with 133 dogs vaccinated by the end of July. These sessions provide valuable opportunities for educating dog owners, children, (the group most at risk) and local communities about rabies and what to do if bitten by a dog. VBB's rabies brochures have been well received.



Parasite Research Program

VBB is delighted to be assisting University of Queensland (UQ) parasitologists in a regional parasite study in Ladakh. A UQ veterinary student has recently visited VBB in Ladakh to collect blood, fecal and ectoparasite samples, building on UQ's visits to VBB projects in 2008. This groundbreaking study will provide valuable information for human and animal populations in the region.

First Regional Sterilisation and Rabies Vaccination Clinic in Ladakh's Nubra Valley

A VBB team conducted Ladakh's first regional sterilisation and vaccination program in the Nubra Valley in July 2009. Initiated by the Deputy Commissioner of Ladakh after receiving complaints about dogs in the region, the program was fully supported by Ladakh Animal Husbandry Department and local authorities.

In 5 days, 81 dogs were sterilised and rabies vaccinated in a milking shed at the Animal Husbandry Department's yak farm on the outskirts of Diskit. Ladakh Project has been invited to return later in the season to continue their excellent work.

The 4-hour drive from Leh to the Nubra Valley traverses the spectacular Khardung La Pass, considered the second highest motor vehicle access road in the world at 18,372 ft/5602M above sea level.



Volunteers

13 veterinary volunteers from Australia, UK, New Zealand, USA and Scotland have donated their time and expertise to the Ladakh Project in the first two months of the season.

If you are interested in volunteering for the Ladakh Project please contact:

jperry@vetsbeyondborders.org

Generous Donations

Medicines, disposables, and financial contributions have been gratefully received from a number of organisations and many VBB members and volunteers.

VBB appreciates the generous support of their principal sponsor Fondation Brigitte Bardot.

It is the enthusiasm and hard work of the staff and volunteers of VBB and the Ladakh Animal Care Society, and the generosity of our donors that ensures the continued success of the Ladakh Project.

SARAH Project SIKKIM

SARAH Program assigned Government Division Status in Sikkim

In May 2009, the Sikkim Anti-Rabies and Animal Health program (SARAH) officially became a part of the Animal Husbandry, Livestock, Fishery and Veterinary Services Department, ensuring the SARAH program will be a long-term initiative. This highlights the significant achievements of this statewide animal birth control antirabies program (ABC/AR).

Sterilisation Project Results

- In the year July 2008 to June 2009, 4364 animals (mostly dogs and some cats) were sterilised, and 7523 animals were vaccinated against rabies.
- Three units were operational - one based at the SARAH Hospital in Gangtok, and 2 mobile units worked throughout the state.
- Eight Government veterinary clinics are available for use by the SARAH Project : Gangtok, Jorethang, Rhenok, Ravangla, Soreng, Dentam, Mangan and Chungthang.

To date, 80-85% of towns and villages of Sikkim have had access to the ABC/AR programme at least once. It is critical that SARAH teams return to each location on a yearly basis to vaccinate all dogs and to sterilise any new dogs.



Animal Health Clinics

SARAH Hospital in Gantok is equipped with ultrasound and xray facilities, and gas anaesthetic circuits. This enables more comprehensive diagnostic investigations and treatment options to be offered. Hundreds of animals have been treated for medical and surgical problems, including amputations, orthopaedics, eye enucleations, tumour removals, open wounds, pyometras, caesareans and TVT. Many travel great distances for treatment. Patients include dogs, cats, goats, pigs, rabbits and birds.

Feral Dog Project

SARAH is assisting the Department of Forests, Conservation and Wildlife Management in Sikkim's northern national parks and Cold Desert, in their efforts to save critically endangered wildlife threatened by feral dog packs. SARAH has commenced ABC/AR work in villages, army and paramilitary camps contiguous to forests and national parks in the extreme north of Sikkim, where stray and abandoned dogs contribute to the feral dog population. Large capture pens and box traps are being used to catch the feral dogs for the ABC/AR program.

Vet training

- To June 30, 2009, a total of 15 Indian veterinarians have received VBB training.
- Seven of these 15 veterinarians are now employed by the SARAH project.
- Three SARAH vets have undertaken further surgical training with Project Vet-Train in Delhi.

Post graduate veterinary education, including two seminars, have been well attended by SARAH and Animal Husbandry Department government veterinarians.

Education

School textbooks with a chapter written by Fondation Brigitte Bardot on animal welfare and antirabies, have been published by the State Institute of Education, in collaboration with SARAH. Provided to all children in 800 Sikkim government schools, the text will be studied as part of the school curriculum in Class 4 & 5 Environmental Studies and Class 5 English.

VBB Volunteers

Twenty veterinary volunteers from many nations have generously donated their time and expertise to the SARAH Project during the year. All are encouraged to participate in the Continuing Education veterinary seminars and present a veterinary topic to their Indian colleagues.

If you are interested in volunteering for the SARAH Project please contact:

helen.byrnes@vetsbeyondborders.org

SARAH will continue to improve animal welfare and veterinary services throughout Sikkim.

VBB would like to acknowledge the generous support of the Fondation Brigitte Bardot and the Government of Sikkim, ensuring the continuing growth and success of this project.

Project VET-TRAIN

Project Vet-Train is a long-term animal-welfare initiative that VBB commenced in January 2009. The objectives of Vet -Train Project are:

- To refine and develop the clinical skills of veterinary graduates and ancillary personnel
- To improve and standardise the quality of veterinary services provided by animal welfare groups in India

Significant secondary public health benefits will flow on from this work.

The pilot project comprised six courses, each of three weeks duration, delivered between February and July 2009. Staffed by VBB personnel, clinical teams were chosen for their specific training experience and skills in selected aspects of veterinary clinical science. Their task was to deliver concise programs on clinical topics of relevance to Indian veterinarians and para-veterinarians.

Results

- A total of 178 veterinary personnel successfully completed training at the National Institute of Animal Welfare (NIAW), Faridabad, India.
- 454 street dogs were sterilised, 485 dogs were rabies vaccinated.
- 53 other surgical procedures were performed, including caesareans, ophthalmic, orthopaedic and hernia operations in which trainees were encouraged to observe and assist.

The pilot project has been very successful in meeting its aims based on evaluation of review data. The courses were well received by attendees, participating animal welfare groups and sponsors.

The Director, Dr Ian Douglas would like to express his sincere thanks to the members of the teaching faculty for their commitment to the project and its trainees.

The Future

It is proposed that Indian authorities will progressively take up administration and funding to ensure the long-term sustainability of the initiative, enabling VBB to withdraw by 2013. Teams will increasingly comprise Indian nationals who have undergone training with Vet-Train.

The pilot phase of the project was a collaborative effort between VBB, the Animal Welfare Board of India and the National Institute of Animal Welfare, Government of India. The pilot was made possible by the generous sponsorship of The Marchig Animal Welfare Trust and RSPCA International.

If you are interested in a position on the Vet-Train team please contact the Project Director, Ian Douglas: vetrain@vetsbeyondborders.org and visit the VBB website www.vetsbeyondborders.org





Vietnam - WHO Project

VBB partners with Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) Program

VBB Board member, Dr Anna Dean was selected as AYAD and assigned to the World Health Organization (WHO) in Vietnam for 12 months in 2008/2009.

The Australian Youth Ambassador for Development (AYAD) Program supports skilled professionals under 30 years of age to work in developing countries across the Asia-Pacific, funded by the Australian Government's overseas aid agency, AusAID.

As the only veterinarian working for WHO Vietnam, Anna was responsible for supporting the Vietnamese government in their efforts to prevent and control zoonotic diseases (infectious diseases transmissible between animals and humans, such as rabies and avian influenza).

Working with key decision-makers in Vietnam gave Anna the opportunity to assist with:

- The development of national policy relating to rabies prevention and control
- The design and implementation of research projects investigating priority zoonotic diseases
- The training of healthcare workers across the country.

Anna's assignment provided an interesting insight into a different culture, political system and a wider scope of diseases.

VBB was pleased to support this initiative, acting as an Australian Partner Organization for the assignment.



VBB Supports Veterinary Training Programs In Indonesia

A very generous donation has enabled VBB to fund a series of surgical animal sterilisation training programs in Indonesia in 2009, for local veterinarians engaged in animal welfare organisations.

VBB allocated funds to Yudisthira, a Bali animal welfare agency comprising local veterinarians, to coordinate a training program based on VBB's sterilisation protocols. Yudisthira staff previously received training by VBB volunteer veterinarians in 2008.

Training programs were conducted in July 2009, in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, for 27 veterinarians including new graduates and students of Gadjah Mada University. Unfortunately, due to the outbreak of rabies in Bali and the urgent secondment of veterinarians to the frontline, several training programs in Bali were postponed.

This project demonstrates VBB's commitment to improving animal welfare by supporting local organisations in the establishment of skills-based training programs for veterinary personnel. Improving the network of skilled veterinary professionals will have a significant long-term impact on animal welfare throughout the region.

To donate online to VBB, please visit:

www.vetsbeyondborders.org/Help.vbb/donate

Together we can help animals and communities

VBB NEWS

Dr Catherine Schuetze steps down as President

In July 2009, Dr Catherine Schuetze resigned as President of VBB. Catherine founded VBB in 2003 and has predominantly maintained Presidency of the organisation, with the exception of the term served by Dr Ian Douglas (August 2005 – December 2006).

Under her guidance, VBB has grown into a multi-faceted organisation with a highly skilled core of hardworking Project Managers and coordinators, an ever-growing army of volunteers, strong collaborative relationships with local organizations, and an expanding portfolio of projects.

Catherine will remain a Board member of VBB, continuing to lend her expertise, gleaned from years of living in India and working in the field of animal welfare, to the benefit of the organisation.

Sikkims New Project manager

Dr Helen Byrne

VBB welcomes Dr Helen Byrnes to the post of Project Manager of the SARAH Program, taking over the reins from Dr Beth McGennissen. Helen is an Australian veterinarian who owns and manages private veterinary practices in Brisbane.

Helen has extensive experience volunteering with VBB in Sikkim in 2006, in Ladakh in 2008, and in the Sera Monastery project in Bylakuppe in early 2009. In addition to her veterinary qualifications, Helen also holds degrees in science and in medical studies, membership of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists (Pharmacology Chapter), and will soon be awarded a Graduate Certificate in Trade Market Law and Practice.

VBB thanks Dr Beth McGennissen for her fantastic work and commitment to the SARAH Project and wishes her all the best for the future.

VBB's Constitutional Amendments

In a Special General Meeting held in July 2009, an amendment was passed to elect three of nine board member positions annually. Board membership will be a three-year tenure with renewable terms.

This will provide opportunity for incoming board members to contribute fresh ideas whilst ensuring continuity in the VBB governing body.

Working voluntarily as a VBB Board member to provide direction for the

organisation is important, challenging and rewarding.

Call for new nominations for three new vacancies will be posted before the Annual General Meeting on 15th November 2009. We are particularly interested in nominations from people with expertise in the communications field (such as promotion, advertising, publicity) or accounting or financial management skills, or possessing legal knowledge, but we also welcome nominations from other interested parties.

Should you have any questions, please contact anna.dean@vetsbeyondborders.org

For a copy of the amended constitution, please contact Karen at the VBB secretariat on +61 (02) 9437 8616 on secretariat@vetsbeyondborders.org

AGENDA FOR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To be held on Sunday, 15 November 2009

**The Jacaranda Room
North Sydney Community Centre
220 Miller Street
North Sydney NSW 2060
Australia**

2.00 pm - 5.00 pm

- Guest Speakers:
Ian Douglas – Project Vet-Train
David Darcy – photographer and VBB Supporter
- New Board Member nominations
- Election of Board Members

Stories From Volunteers

Adventures of a VBB volunteering couple

After selling my practice in 2007, my wife and I decided to do some volunteering in India with VBB. We arrived in Sikkim in April 2008 and worked for 2 weeks in Gangtok and another 2 weeks in Tashiding.

In Tashiding, our team visited several small villages in remote areas doing desexing clinics. Clinics were set up wherever it was convenient: the end of a track, outside a monastery, in a schoolyard, on the side of a road and in a recently built vet office without power or windows but thankfully, a water supply!

We also walked the streets vaccinating stray dogs, and visited a school to give a talk on VBB, the SARAH project and about Australia. Some spare time on weekends enabled us to do some local touring with our aides who were great guides. We often took them to dinner in a local hotel, where a rice meal, with fish or chicken and a beer or whisky each, would cost Au\$15 for seven people.

Volunteering gives one a great feeling. To be able to advise and help Indian vets who have not had opportunities to experience many practical aspects of veterinary medicine and surgery is very rewarding. Many vets did not have experience using dental instruments or performing routine surgical procedures like entropions, lumpectomies or simple orthopaedic procedures.

Meeting the locals, talking to people in the street, like the local policeman, the army major or the shopkeeper's daughter who loved speaking English, was all part of the PR that endears VBB to the locals. We received wonderful hospitality from local veterinary staff, and have made new friends with both local and visiting veterinary personnel. The scenery is spectacular and people are kind, generous and as fascinating to us as we are to them.

Dr Tim and Jen



Volunteering Buddies in Sikkim

PART ONE- Mangan Sterilisation clinic

We were taking a year off from responsible adult life, and our vet jobs in the UK. Nothing could have prepared us for the rewarding nature of the volunteering work with the SARAH Project, or the breathtaking beauty of the Himalayan mountains.

The morning after our arrival in Gangtok, we braved the 3 hour jolty, bumpy and windy jeep ride to Mangan, a small town 60 km north of Gangtok. We were met off the jeep by the veterinary team with whom we were to work for the duration of our month with SARAH. And it was straight to work... We were given a quick tour of the facilities; a very impressive building with 3 operating tables, a prep area, recovery area and good kenneling facilities allowing dogs to be kept under observation overnight before release next day.

We scrubbed up outdoors, at the hosepipe, which was skillfully balanced on a bamboo frame, while the veterinary nurses efficiently administered the anaesthetics and surgically prepared the dogs. We were instantly in awe of their ability to single handedly restrain, inject, intubate and scrub the dogs, and even perform one-handed intravenous injections. We did try to match their impeccable technique, but to no avail. These guys simply rocked at their jobs, and there was just no way we could compete with them. Another thing, which amazed us, were the dogs themselves. They would simply stand there and accept intramuscular injections without even a whimper or even needing to be restrained. They welcomed the human attention and showed very little aggression, unlike the wimpy over-humanised UK pet population who will do back flips off consult tables even before the needle has touched them.

The SARAH project protocols stipulated a flank approach and so we gulped down the fear of the unfamiliar and got stuck in under the encouraging assistance of Dr Shams, the project veterinarian. With pride, I placed my last intradermal suture just 30 minutes after starting the surgery, only to look up and see that Dr Shams had done one bitch spay and two dog castrations in that time. His ability to complete surgery at the speed of lightening was a great mystery to us. We observed him operating, to try and pick up some tips and uncover his secret. He was always calm, and methodical, operating with calculated precision. And yet he rarely took longer than 15 minutes to spay a bitch-such mastery. We were not able to match his speed even during our most efficient moments of surgical prowess.

The workload was steady, but with three vets operating simultaneously we would get through the daily 15-20 dog sterilisations in the space of a morning. This meant that we were free agents in the afternoons and indulged in immersing ourselves in the rural Sikkimese culture.

To be continued...

Dr Marie

