



## 2007 Update

### March 2007 - Dominican Republic

Animal Balance (AB) has just finished the first campaign on the Dominican Republic, Caribbean. This project was primarily funded by The Pegasus Foundation and Best Friends Animal Society, International Division. Our team of 12 volunteer vets, techs and helpers sterilized 204 cats and dogs in 10 days in the worst rain storms the DR has witnessed in 10 years. 10 of the volunteers had worked on previous AB campaigns on the Galapagos and so had experience working in another culture, which was vital to the campaigns success. They worked as a very efficient team, on a shoe string budget in very basic conditions to accomplish this great life saving work.

We targeted the DR for many reasons, but the central reasons were that no other animal protection organizations were working in this area of the island, the dogs and cats were breeding out of control and the authorities had performed sporadic poisoning in failed attempts to control the populations. They agreed to stop killing if we sterilized at no cost to them.

Our first target town was Cabrera, a small fishing village on the North East Coast. The DR's tourist industry is currently exploding. The south coast has a vast expanse of resorts attracting people from all over the world for a cheap Caribbean vacation. More recently the more rugged North coast has experienced the same influx of tourists, plus a large number of ex-pats have relocated there often bringing their pets who breed with the local cats and dogs increasing the over population problem in the area.



Animal Balance Clinic in Cabrera, DR



Recovery, plus some of the AB Team with Merlin, a street dog who had been hit by a car chasing female dogs. He had a badly broken leg and so the AB team put a splint o his leg, neutered him, treated him for parasites and re-homed him.



MASH Clinic at Playa Grande, the local beach.



Recovery was carried out in tents.



Local people pitched in to help.

The local vet, Dr. Nelson Medina, was not trained in the spaying and neutering of companion animals and spends 99% of his time on farms treating large animals. The local people cannot afford to get their pets sterilized. We found that Cabrera was the perfect place to utilize our experience and skills to help vast numbers of animals and people. We held our clinic in an ex-pizza restaurant for 9 days and then we set up tents and tarps between the palm trees on the local beach to fix the free roaming beach dogs.

We had carried out an outreach campaign 2 weeks prior to the campaign. The local Mayor, Jorge Cavoli, endorsed the project and provided help by distributing fliers and sending a car around the town with a loud speaker letting people know the times and location of the free clinic. In addition Animal Balance visited the local schools carrying out a humane education program and explaining to the children why it was important for them to bring their animals to the clinic. Once the campaign started we ran radio and television advertisements that were kindly underwritten by Cabrera Verde, a local environmental group organized by the ex-pat community.

The community embraced the project and many people stopped by to help out, bring food, make coffee or help with translations. The ex-pat community was very supportive and just a cell phone call away when we needed something quickly. The project was based on the Galapagos campaign, we gave everyone a collar and leash, all the animals for were treated for parasites and any other broken legs or other injuries that we found or were brought in were also treated. Plus, we found homes for unwanted or stray animals. Anyone that asked for vaccinations were directed to Dr. Nelson Medina's office to ensure that we kept a nice balance with him in regards to his business. He provided support and encouraged many people to come to the clinic.

We spent one day at Playa Grande, the main local beach where 13 dogs live eating from the local kiosks that provide food to the tourists. The kiosk owners keep an eye on them and agreed to have them all sterilized. As they did not have transport we set the clinic up on the beach under the palm trees. We sterilized all the dogs except one, who was far too sick to operate on. He was found trapped and starving in an unused kiosk. He was given Revolution, a vitamin injection and treated for worms and will be sterilized in the next campaign. The kiosk owners will let me us know if there are any problems with the dogs and in the meantime we will try to find homes for some of them. We will be erecting a sign at Playa Grande, with the help of Cabrera Verde, explaining our campaign and its impact and asking for a donation via the AB website.



Rescue of trapped puppy

On the last day of the campaign we held a dog training class at the town square. Many people came by and joined in. The children all received coloring pages that had a message about how to take care of their pets.

Anne Ostberg, the Program Director for the Pegasus Foundation and Judy Liggio, of The Friends of Animals, from Sousa visited the project in Cabrera. Judy has a clinic in Sousa, a few hours from Cabrera and we will be collaborating on the next campaign.

I have relocated to the DR now and am working out a strategic plan for the animals on the North Coast of the DR with the authorities, ex-pats, schools, and community at large. Given the positive response received from this project we will be planning further MASH campaigns as soon as we can raise the funds. Our teams can set up anywhere and sterilize large numbers of animals quickly and safely. In the meantime I will be teaching humane education and dog training classes in the village to keep the issue on everyone's radar.



**February 2007**

Animal Balance launched a new website. [www.animalbalance.org](http://www.animalbalance.org)

**January 2007 - Galapagos Islands**

In late January a small team of 6 Animal Balance volunteers went to the Galapagos for one week. This was primarily sponsored by the Charles Darwin Foundation. The goal of the trip was to be featured in a BBC program about children and conservation. In addition to the filming we spent many days sterilizing animals. We were warmly welcomed once again by the authorities and community. Everyone now knows what we need and we get straight to business as soon as we arrive. The CIMEI, our partners, prepare everything in terms of outreach and logistics and we set up and sterilize from dawn to dusk.

The BBC filmed the project on Isabela Island. A member of our Advisory Board, Richard Wollocombe, kindly coordinated the shooting. The BBC had held a competition in the UK, inviting children to send in DVD's about why specific areas of the planet should be preserved. Alex, a little boy from Cambridge, won the Galapagos section. Alex visited the project and joined the Galapadonian children in an AB dog training and humane education program. The village children told Alex about the project, why it was important and the differences they had witnessed since AB started working there. Hearing our message from the children's mouths was amazing, they understood exactly why it was important to protect ALL species and not kill any. They were very matter of fact and explained very plainly why one animal should not have to die to save another and how AB had provided the tools for people to take care of their pets.

The BBC film crew took away excellent footage of kids walking dogs on leashes, learning how to check the health of the animals, shots of the kids talking about the importance of AB's work in front of marine iguana colonies with the spectacular backdrop of the islands.



Alex then interviewed me and I had an opportunity to talk about the project as a whole. The program will be aired in the UK in July in conjunction with a celebration of conservation at Wembley Stadium in London. The BBC's David Attenborough is the voice over for the piece. The foundations that supported this program have put aside funds that will be divided up amongst the charities after the event. The program will then be translated into Spanish and will be aired in Ecuador and on the Galapagos Islands.

#### **AB Plans For The Remainder of 2007**

- We are fund raising for a final campaign on the Galapagos scheduled for June 2007. This will probably be our last massive MASH campaign on the islands as we have reached over 75% of the animals already. Top-up campaigns are planned for 2008 as we slowly pull out of the Galapagos. We still plan to be involved in the policy and political side of the work however, to ensure that the control of cats and dogs on the Galapagos remains humane.
- We will work with the authorities and other S. American animal protection organizations to find solutions to the repetitive outbreaks of Distemper on the islands.
- We will be fund raising for more campaigns on the DR in 2007 both in the DR and in the US.
- We have been asked to help groups in the pan-pacific and we are starting to strategize with these organizations.
- I will be presenting at the Animal Rights Conference in LA in July 2007.  
<http://www.arconference.org/>
- Dr. Julie Levy will be presenting AB's use of Neutersol on the Galapagos at an Ethology Conference in Mexico City in July. If I can find the funds I will join her.  
<http://www.isae2007.com/index.html>
- Dr. July Levy will be publishing a report on AB's use of Neutersol at the end of 2007.
- Once the June campaign is completed AB will write a project report on the Galapagos Project results for publication.

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The BBC filming the children in a humane education class, Isabela Island, Galapagos.