



## Summer 2007 Report

### June : Galápagos Islands Sterilization Campaign

In June, 12 volunteers joined Animal Balance for a follow up and final large MASH style campaign on the Galapagos. For 2 weeks the team visited each island and joined forces with The CIMEI (Municipality), SEGAL (Quarantine) and Galapagos National Park Service to sterilize any remaining intact cats and dogs.



The team sterilized 49 animals on Santa Cruz, 49 on San Cristobal and 10 on Isabela. We were delighted that it was tough to find intact animals. We have now fixed 96% of the cats and dogs that live in the Municipal areas of the islands. The Ecuadorian vets are trained, have the supplies and equipment they need and are organized to carry on with the sterilization program. Animal Balance will now just conduct 'top-up' campaigns in the future. The entire project is now being managed by the CIMEI on each island. Animal Balance will now be an advisor to the CIMEI committee.



In March, there was an outbreak of Distemper on Isabela Island. We believe it arrived on Isabela via a number of smuggled dogs - unfortunately some local 'entrepreneurs' have started smuggling pure bred dogs onto the islands and are breeding them for sale. Due to the increase in satellite television and general global awareness, people are now choosing to own pure bred dogs. As no new animals are allowed onto the islands, an underground market of pure bred dogs has started. SEGAL has started a campaign to deter this, but there is a great amount of money to be made and it is difficult to stop.

On the one hand, these new dogs are status symbols and are well cared for, kept inside and walked on leash. The people give them love and show off their dogs to their friends. On the other hand, these new dogs are not only adding to the population, but are not suited to the climate and so dogs such as Siberian Huskies and Bulldogs are having health problems living in this hot, arid climate.



People are vaccinating their dogs against Parvo and Distemper. This vaccine is 'live' and therefore illegal to bring to the islands. The subject has become intensely controversial with the authorities on the islands. Animal Balance would like to help to change the law so that vaccinations are allowed onto the islands to protect all the dogs and the other native mammals on the islands. The Ecuadorian vet on Santa Cruz, Dr. Ruben Aleman, estimates that 65% of all the dogs on Santa Cruz are vaccinated at this time. This proves people very much want to do what is best for their pets and in this case we believe that vaccinations will protect all animals.

Sadly, since March, 50 dogs have died or been euthanized due to an outbreak of Distemper on Isabela Island. We visited Isabela in June and conducted an education campaign regarding distemper. Each person we spoke to told us how

awful the situation was in March. We were able to visit homes and check on many dogs and give information out on the radio about how to prevent the disease from spreading. We visited many families - now friends, who had lost dogs and gave support and sympathy. Many just wanted to tell their story to someone who cared. We felt that by the time we left people were well informed about the disease, where it came from and how to prevent it in the future. Everyone we spoke to would like vaccinations to be legalized.

It is evident that people's interaction and appreciation for their pets has changed dramatically in the past four years. There are very few dogs loose in the streets, there is far less barking, and we did not see any packs of males looking for females in heat. The dogs look well taken care of, most wearing collars and many being walked with a leash. People were approaching us and letting us know where the intact animals were, or where there were dogs tied up without water or shelter. People are even breaking the law to protect their animals against disease. This signifies a huge shift in attitude towards 'pet guardianship'.

### **July: Animal Rights Conference in LA**

In July, AB collaborated with The Alliance for the Contraception in Cats and Dogs (ACC&D) and spoke at the Animal Rights Conference. We spoke about how we work to protect ALL species, whether native or non-native. That we employ kind, intelligent strategies, form collaborations with all the decision makers in the area and work in a grassroots manner to achieve our humane objectives: to reduce and manage the cat and dog populations and provide assistance to ensure that the program is sustainable and eventually locally managed. We utilize the latest, most humane technology for the animals. For example, we used a cutting edge product called Neutersol, for the male dogs on the Galapagos Islands. Each dog received an injection into each testicle which rendered them sterile for life. No anesthesia or cutting was necessary. This technology will revolutionize our work as it becomes more available. This new information was received well in the AR community and we hope to gain more support from this sector of the animal protection movement.

### **September: Dominican Republic Sterilization Campaign**

A truly international volunteer team from Puerto Rico, US, Ireland and Canada came to the DR in early September and set up a temporary clinic in the local disco. It provided plenty of space and everyone knew exactly where it was as it's a very popular hang out on the main road in town.

We were inundated with animals. We sterilized 98 animals in 6 days with the smallest AB team ever. This was our second campaign in the DR and thus far we have now sterilized 302 animals in the northern town of Cabrera. The Municipality provided daily trash pick ups and sent a car around town with a loud speaker telling people to come to the clinic with their pets. Local people helped us in the recovery unit and many people brought us coffee and cold drinks so we didn't have to stop. We all agreed this was the hardest campaign as yet as there were few of us and an abundance of dogs. People brought their animals to us so we did not have to leave the clinic to do any pick ups. This has never happened before.

There is a huge need for further campaigns in the DR. We must find the funds locally, and in the US, to support further campaigns. We have the support of the local community, the Municipality, and the local vet. There is a dire need for Animal Balance to bring the resources to the DR to help the people and the animals. People are poor and unemployment is very high here. Most people survive day to day finding work as manual laborers. Tourism has not reached this far along the North coast as yet. By reducing the dog and cat populations here it will ensure that the towns and beaches are cleaner and the animals will become healthier and easier to manage. In turn this will provide a more welcoming environment for tourists and the economy will prosper. The North coast of the DR is a beautiful area with incredible scenery and warm people. Animal Balance is proud that we have been accepted, trusted and invited to arrange further clinics by this community.



In Conclusion, this summer has been very busy for AB. We are planning our fundraising strategy so we will have the capacity to help more islands such as Tahiti and Samoa in 2008, as well as working on our existing projects. To help with this, we have just launched our e-newsletter asking people to join the AB team. We hope that this funding source will provide the backbone of support for our work in the future.

### **Thank you to our 2007 sponsors and collaborators!**

Galapagos Conservancy  
Galapagos National Park Service  
CIMEI – Municipality of the Galapagos  
Best Friends Animal Society, International  
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Cabrera Verde



Both the sealion and the dog (sterilized) wait at the fish station in Puerto Ayora, Santa Cruz Island, Galápagos, for leftovers.

Thank you to 250 AB volunteers', who are unquestionably one of the most generous, dedicated and compassionate groups of people on the planet. They have carried out over 3,000 surgeries on 5 different islands around the world in the last 4 years in very remote areas with very basic supplies. They have paid for their own flights, hotels, food and have brought boxes upon boxes of donated supplies from home. The energy they have generated ensures that AB will continue to help islands around the world where ecosystems are very delicate, or the community faces a huge over population problem and does not have the resources to humanely solve it. The projects do not happen without the volunteers, their value cannot be understated. Thank you all!

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