



# *Tsunami Memorial Animal Welfare Trust*



# Annual Report 2005

*Renamed in 2006 to  
Tsunami Animal-People Alliance  
to underline the link between the welfare of the animals  
and the welfare of the people in the tsunami zone*



## **Tsunami Animal-People Alliance**

# Message from the Chairman of the Board

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Out of the destruction from one of the world's worst natural disasters rose the Tsunami Memorial Animal Welfare Trust as a living legacy to all who suffered, both people and animals. From the generous support of many throughout the world we have been able to establish a team of Sri Lankan vets, vet technicians and dog catchers dedicated to animal welfare, to reduce the incidence of human rabies and dog bites while providing solutions to stray dog population management in Sri Lanka. I continue to be in awe of our team's dedication while working under harsh and difficult conditions leaving their homes three weeks of every month to live within the communities working toward recovery in the tsunami affected areas providing vaccinations, spay/neuter clinics, general vet care and treatment to community dogs and education.

I was proud that our team was selected by an International NGO to be part of a Disaster Go Team to respond to the cyclone and flood in India providing disaster relief at the VSPCA in Vishakapatnam, India, as well as providing flood response to our own Animal Welfare & Protection Association here in Sri Lanka. It is extremely rewarding that our team has now been called upon to teach and replicate our Sri Lanka program to others so that we may touch the lives of so many more animals and the people who share their world.

Many thanks again to all who have made this possible and whose support continues to make it possible for us to play a role in Sri Lanka's long term road to recovery.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Senaka S. Kotagama'. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Senaka S. Kotagama

# Goals, Objectives and Strategies

## Goals

Our goal is to improve the welfare and living environment of Sri Lanka's animals and people, particularly in the tsunami-impacted zones, where recovery has been estimated to be a ten year process.

## Objectives

Our objectives to attain this goal include:

- Humane community dog population management
- Reduction of rabies by creating rabies free areas where TMAWT works
- Reduction of dog bites, particularly among children

## Strategies

Our strategy is to implement of a Catch-Neuter-Vaccinate-Release (CNVR) program in the tsunami-impacted zone. A mobile tent-based surgical field clinic moves from community to community with a goal of sterilizing and vaccinating at least 75% of the dogs (both owner-dogs, community or street dogs). Same-day release of the dogs is made possible by adhering to high standards of asepsis and surgery protocols which is humane and conducive to fast healing. The dogs are returned to the exact spot where caught, making use of their territoriality to control the population which is a critical factor to success. We use large "butterfly" nets to humanely catch community/street dogs, while also reducing the risk of injury to them as well as to TMAWT staff.

A well-executed CNVR program yields a stable vaccinated dog population, reducing the incidence of human rabies while preventing the mass-killing of dogs as an uninformed, ineffective and inhumane means of rabies reduction.

The TMAWT CNVR program, coupled with education, also reduces dog bites. Spaying female dogs, in addition to reducing the population, reduces the litters that the females protect, often in an aggressive manner. Neutering male dogs reduces their aggressive behavior often evident during mating season. Children are often the victims of these aggressive behaviors, both due to their attraction to puppies as well as being at eye-level with the dogs and not understanding the ramifications of natural canine behavior.

TMAWT also seeks to improve the standard of veterinary medicine and surgery practice within Sri Lanka, including the introduction of pain management, asepsis and the concept of Early Age Neutering (EAN).

Additionally, TMAWT provides a model for dog population management in Sri Lanka, as well as seizing opportunities to propagate and replicate our field tested methodologies and processes throughout the region. Our field clinic also provides general veterinary care to all animals on an as needed basis. This model has been recognized by the Minister of Health as a viable and humane solution to community/street dog population management – an alternative to mass killing.



# About TMAWT Work

## Areas of Operation

- East Coast: tsunami affected coastline from Yala National Park north
- South Coast: tsunami affected coastline from Yala National Park and Kirinda towards Panadura.

## TMAWT Prioritization Guidelines

- A focus on tsunami-impacted areas
- Ability to obtain no-kill agreements in exchange for sterilizing and vaccinating the dogs in the targeted community
- Working where the veterinary infrastructure is limited or unavailable (i.e., there are no vets to do the work )
- The potential to transfer same-day release CNVR knowledge and skills such that replication can greatly leverage the impact of our limited resources, benefiting additional animals and the people who share their environment. (i.e. TMAWT was contracted in early 2006 to develop a CNVR programme and train six teams in Ahmedabad, Gujarat in India).



## Impact and Accomplishments

### TMAWT Founded

The Tsunami Memorial Animal Welfare Trust was legally established on 16 March 2005. TMAWT took over field operations in May 2005 from the disaster response team fielded by Humane Society International and Bali's Yudisthira Foundation.

### TMAWT Team

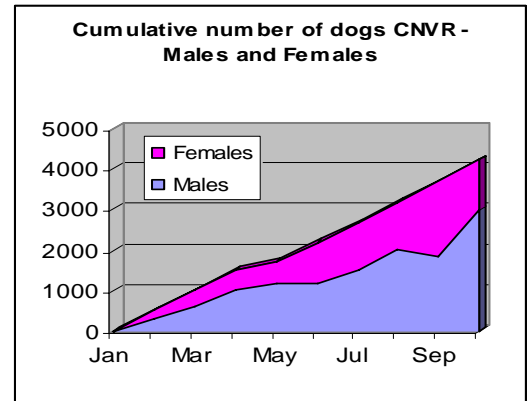
A highly motivated Sri Lankan team has been assembled and trained by professional veterinarians, vet techs and dog catchers. This program duplicates the CVNR "template" that has been successfully trialed and implemented in Bali and Banda Aceh, Indonesia and Phuket, Thailand. The TMAWT team temporarily lives in the devastated tsunami communities being served. The field clinics process dogs through an organized routine of catch, evaluate to be fit for surgery, weigh, pre-surgery medication and anesthetic, pre-op prep, surgery, post-op monitoring and recovery, and return to exact spot where caught (or to the owner). Each dog is fitted with a red collar to indicate that it has been vaccinated. Because the red collars are eventually lost, all dogs are ear notched while under anesthetic for neutering. The ear notch also serves a permanent indicator to TMAWT dog catchers and municipality employees that the dog has already been sterilized and vaccinated thus eliminating re-catching and reducing the risk of being killed by government employees given the task of random culling of community dogs.



# About TMAWT Work (con't)

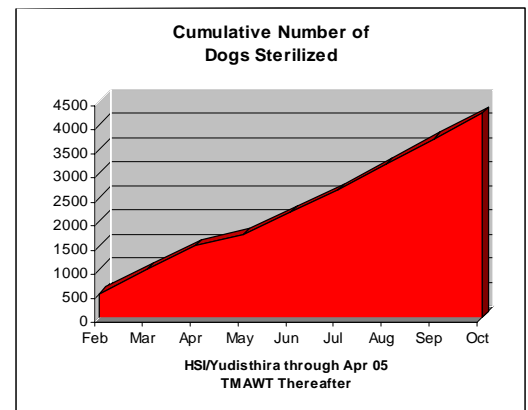
## Statistics

During the remainder of 2005, over 5,000 dogs were sterilized and vaccinated in the tsunami zones. The number of dogs sterilized ranges from over 50 per day when TMAWT first begins to work in a community and levels out to 25 per day as the team approaches saturation in that community. This yields an average of about 35 dogs per day. It is crucial to sterilize at least 75% of the dogs as at this level we achieve zero population growth. Consequently, TMAWT must continue in that community even as the daily rate drops. TMAWT strives to sterilize 85-90% of the community/street dogs and low/no income owner dogs.



## Standards

TMAWT Standard Operating Procedures including asepsis, surgical techniques and strict protocols are of paramount importance in protecting the welfare of the animals in a mass sterilization program. The TMAWT field clinic has successfully demonstrated that the standards expected in a static veterinary clinic can also be attained in a field environment.



## Publicity and Public Awareness

Descriptions of our work, as well as raising awareness of animal welfare issues, have been included in newspaper articles and TV broadcasts both within Sri Lanka and internationally, including in the Washington Post (USA), BBC (UK), St. Petersburg Times (Florida, USA), and New Straits Times (Malaysia). In addition to our own website [www.tsunami-animal.org](http://www.tsunami-animal.org), the work of TMAWT has been described on the websites and publications of well-respected organizations such as those of WSPA, Humane Society International, Best Friends Animal Society and Animal People News.

Tsunami-related animal welfare headlines within Sri Lanka included:

*"Sterilization of dogs, an effective alternative to killing"  
Caring for animals in the tsunami-ravaged areas"*

*They too need love – Not only humans, but their much loved pets and livestock were caught up in the tsunami"*

*Treating Animals Humanely"*

*Stray dog protection campaign takes a leap forward"*

*"Humane' legislation for animals"*

*"Pets fill in the gap of companionship"*

# About TMAWT Work (con't)

## Medical Perspective

Although the mission of the field clinic is mass sterilization, the team has treated a number of animals, including dogs, cats, and others, for both tsunami-related injuries as well as non-tsunami-related injuries and diseases, often which would have been fatal and for which no veterinary care was available. All services are provided free of charge.

TMAWT introduced Early Age Neutering (EAN) to Sri Lanka as a safe and effective population management method, as well as raising awareness of pain management and mitigation.



## Education

### Community

In each community, TMAWT first meets with community leaders and officials to explain how the CNVR program works, the benefits of humane population management and how this reduces rabies and dog bites. Initial skepticism usually turns into offers of assistance once the concepts are understood by the community.



### Avoiding Dog Bites' Brochure

Many dog bites are the result of a simple lack of knowledge of canine behavior. The vast majority of dog bites do not involve rabid dogs, but are often from community dogs or even owned dogs. Regardless, most Sri Lankan victims seek costly medical treatment - even if the dog is known. These costly, and most often unnecessary treatments, deplete precious limited government resources that could be used for other benefits.

During 2005 TMAWT developed a brochure, with attention paid to targeting children, on how to avoid dog bites. TMAWT hopes this will reduce the actual pain of the victims that might otherwise be bitten, minimize subsequent harm to the dogs, and reduce the financial burden on the government for treatment. This brochure, with color graphics depicting Sri Lankan children and adults; local dogs and environment; will be published in early 2006 in English, Sinhalese and Tamil. The brochure stresses simple avoidance actions such as not running near a dog, making a wide circle around dogs that are tied, not disturbing puppies whose mother may be near and seek to protect them, as well as how to react to a dog that comes just to sniff, and what to do if actually attacked.

## Vaccine Partnership

TMAWT formed a partnership with Pfizer Animal Health US and its local agent to distribute and monitor Pfizer's generous donation of 50,000 doses of Defensor anti-rabies vaccine to assist Sri Lankan animal welfare NGOs, especially those working in the tsunami zone.

## W.H.O.

Delegates attending a regional WHO Rabies Control conference in late 2005 visited the TMAWT field clinic to learn about the TMAWT CNVR program and the Standard Operating Procedures necessary to conduct a safe and humane mass sterilization program in the field using same day release methods.

# ***TMAWT Capacity Building***

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## **Training**

The TMAWT team has been trained in key hole speed spay/neuter surgery with an emphasis on strict asepsis. Both are critical components to reduce infection and post op complications which are key to the success of same day Catch-Neuter- Vaccinate-Release. The Humane Society International provided training sponsorship whereby Yudisthira -Bali Street Dog Foundation provided a full veterinary team to train Sri Lanka vets and support staff while providing the template for a CNVR Field Clinic that for six years has been trialed and implemented with successful results.

## **Volunteer Vets/Nurses**

The Volunteer Veterinary Programme will enhance and provide value added training, specialized medicine and case work. These expat volunteers pay their own international travel expenses to Sri Lanka where they live and work with the team in the field. International volunteer vets provide a broad range of exposure to medicine beyond that in Sri Lanka's veterinary education, training and profession, raising the level of the team's skills. Subsequently, these volunteers provide the link for opportunities and internships abroad. Temporary registration is obtained with the Veterinary Council of Sri Lanka for all TMAWT international volunteer vets.

## **Capacity Building for Others**

TMAWT can greatly leverage impact to improve the welfare of community animals and the people who share their world through education and the transfer of knowledge, skills and procedures implemented with the TMAWT CNVR Field Clinic.

- During 2005, TMAWT team members partnered with India's Animal Health Foundation to formed the core Go Team for the Humane Society International sponsored flood disaster relief to the VSPCA in Vishakapatnam, India. The TMAWT team members were able to utilize the opportunity to assess the VSPCA current spay/neuter program and introduce a new appreciation of surgery for the purpose of spay/neuter, with an emphasis on advanced asepsis methods.
- Provided dog catching training to Save Our Friends Association (SOFA) in Kandy, Sri Lanka in the use of nets rather than nooses and other inhumane dog catching methods to be used for SOFA's CNVR program.
- Provided introductory exposure internships for five young Sri Lankan vets of field clinic surgery techniques.

# Emergency Assistance

## Flooding in Vishakapatnam, India

In November 2005, Humane Society International sponsored members of the TMAWT team as part of the GO TEAM to provide an emergency flood response and recovery to the Vishakapatnam (India) VSPCA. Many VSPCA vets and staff could not report to work as they were overwhelmed coping with the plight of their own families. TMAWT team members helped with the recovery efforts, worked in the VSPCA shelter, provided dog catching and training for VSPCA dog catchers for the spay/neuter program VSPCA provides to the municipality. TMAWT vets filled in for VSPCA vets in the Spay/Neuter clinic and livestock field stations treating and vaccinating livestock. Additional work was taken on to launch the survey and assessment of the extent of the further spread of hoof and mouth disease endemic in the area.



Working into the night at VSPCA, Visakapatnam, India

## Colombo Flooding

Intense rains caused flooding in parts of Colombo in late 2005. Two shelters of the Colombo-based Animal Welfare & Protection Association (AWAPA) sustained flood damage and TMAWT field team responded to the call for help, making a long overnight drive from the field to treat the animals that survived, and help clean up the shelter to return it to operation.





# Challenges and Donors

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## Challenges

Funding remains our most serious challenge. It is not inexpensive to field a team of eleven working for extended periods in remote locations. Our cost to sterilize a dog is approximately US\$20 (consisting of approximately US\$10 for medicines and surgical supplies and US\$10 for staff salaries, housing and food, van to transport dogs, etc). And we average about 35 dogs per day (often over 50 dogs per day when TMAWT first arrives in a new location, dropping to 25 per day after we have saturated an area while continuing to work toward the minimum 75% sterilization target.) A typical village has a dog population of 250 to 500 dogs. It adds up!

In order to provide the highest standard of humane medical treatment and protect the welfare of the animals, we cannot compromise on the quality of the medicines or supplies such as anesthetics, pain medications or suture materials. Additionally, the team is asked to spend long hours for extended periods, working and living in difficult conditions in the tsunami zone where much of the infrastructure has been destroyed. We must, therefore, ensure the team's well-being with reasonable food and shelter.

Sri Lanka is a poor country, so TMAWT must depend almost totally on outside funding. In order to keep the dream alive, the experts advise that we invest more in fund-raising than our present level of less than 0.5%. Our overheads are about 3.2%, with over 96% of expenses being field project costs. To that end, our plans for 2006 include building a broader membership/donor base. This will include implementing an on-line donation option on our website as well as increasing our face-to-face requests for assistance. 2006 will also bring the setting up a US 501c3 (tax exempt) NGO "Friends of the Tsunami Memorial Animal Welfare Trust." Friends of TMAWT is already incorporated in the US, and is applying for 501c3 status with pro-bono assistance from the law firm of Chadbourne & Park, LLC. In addition to offering tax deductibility of donations for US income tax purposes, this will also open the door to seek funding from US organizations that require 501c3 status. In the interim, we thank Animal People ([www.animalpeoplenews.org](http://www.animalpeoplenews.org)), a 501c3 non-profit, for continuing to accept donations earmarked for TMAWT from those donors requiring US income tax deductibility.

## Donors

TMAWT could not have achieved these accomplishments without the generous support of many animal welfare organizations and individuals around the world. TMAWT and the people and animals of Sri Lanka wish to thank all of our supporters, both large and small, without whom none of this would have been possible. Annex A includes listings of our supporters, both financial contributors, as well as those who made or facilitated contributions in kind which directly offset medical and field expenses. Annex A also includes a listing of our "Honorary Members" for 2005 – in recognition of the organizations and individuals who made financial or in-kind donations to the Tsunami People-Animal Welfare Coalition, which helped provide the immediate post-tsunami response. The Coalition then focused its support to assist TMAWT in its long term tsunami recovery efforts.

All donations are used for work in the tsunami impacted areas of Sri Lanka and capacity building of our own TMAWT team. Emergency response and capacity building in other countries are financially sponsored by other organizations.

# Directors and Team

## TMAWT Volunteer Board of Directors:

**Mr. Senaka S. Kotegama** (Sri Lanka), TMAWT Chairman of the Board and well-respected Sri Lankan businessman with a special interest in animal welfare

**Dr. Subash Dananjaya** (Sri Lanka), TMAWT Chief veterinary surgeon and manager/team leader of the TMAWT field clinic.

**Ms. Sherry Grant** (American), TMAWT Co-Founder and the Yudisthira Foundation in Bali (Bali Street Dogs) Co-founder, with extensive experience in animal welfare in Asia and the inspiration behind establishing and providing the direction of TMAWT.

**Ms. Dawn Peacock** (British), an animal welfare specialist with extensive experience in animal welfare in Asia, who was instrumental in transferring procedures, processes, and lessons learned to TMAWT from Yudisthira Foundation (the Bali Street Dog Program) assisting in field operations and research.

**Mr. Robert Blumberg** (American), an engineer resident in Sri Lanka who helped form the Tsunami People-Animal Welfare Coalition to provide the initial response in Sri Lanka immediately after the tsunami and then co-founded TMAWT and helps manage its operations.

**Dr. Elaine Ong** (Australian), a veterinary surgeon who owns a top Veterinary Hospital in Melbourne and has experience in developing countries. She worked as a volunteer vet in Sri Lanka sterilizing dogs in the tsunami refugee camps, provided in situ training and now serves as TMAWT Coordinator of Volunteers

## TMAWT Field Team

The 11 person TMAWT Field Team consists of four veterinary surgeons, plus team members who serve as vet techs, dog catchers, community liaison, van driver, and field logistics coordinator. The team achieves its effectiveness through flexible responsibilities – e.g., the vet techs (and even the vets) assist the dog catchers when needed, and several of the vet techs and dog catchers are cross-trained as vet techs.



# Financials

In order to monitor and control our finances, TMAWT has adopted the same international standard software accounting package used by our auditor (Sri Lankan Chartered Accountants A&S Associates of Colombo). A&S has provided extensive guidance in establishing TMAWT chart of accounts and provides guidance to ensure that our accounting methods conform to professional norms. The Sri Lankan Fiscal Year is April 1 – March 31. A&S audited the books for the Fiscal Year ending 31 March 2005, and will do so again for the Fiscal year ending 31 March 2006. Financials available upon request.

The TMAWT budget is based on a target of 7,500 dogs per year. As indicated previously sterilizing each dog costs about US\$20 per dog (consisting of approximately US\$10 for medicines and surgical supplies, and approximately \$10 for salaries, field living expenses, van for transporting dogs, etc). The cost of medicines and supplies are partially offset by donations in kind.

Our overheads are about 3.2%, with over 96% of expenses being field project costs and the experts advise that we invest more in fund-raising than our present level of less than 0.5%.



# TMAWT Future

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## 2006 Plans and Opportunities

- Continue CNVR field clinic programs in the tsunami-impacted zones of Sri Lanka
- Publish and distribute the brochure 'How To Avoid Dog Bites' (described pg 5 ).
- Seek additional opportunities to continue building the capacity of TMAWT team. For example:
  - TMAWT's Chief Veterinary Surgeon/Field Team leader has received sponsorship for a week's internship at a large animal shelter in San Diego after making an invited presentation at the HSUS 2006 Animal Expo to describe the work of TMAWT and participation as a member of a disaster Go Team.
  - Another TMAWT veterinary surgeon has been invited to Malaysia for a two week internship in eye surgery, an undeveloped veterinary specialty in Sri Lanka.
  - Two dog catchers will serve as trainers for a three week Dog Catching Workshop covering eight Municipalities in Malaysia, increasing their experience in training others.
  - The entire TMAWT team has been sponsored to help to train and set up the template to establish a large CNVR program in India (see below), which will increase TMAWT's capacity to transfer knowledge, skills and lessons learned to other field teams.
  - The Volunteer Visiting Vets/Nurses program will continue to bring new ideas and experience to the team.

TMAWT successful CNVR Field Clinics has gained recognition internationally and Training the Trainers program will greatly leverage TMAWT impact in improving the welfare of the animals and the people in Asia.

The entire TMAWT team has been sponsored by the Municipal Council of Ahmedabad, India, to work with the Animal Help Foundation AHF) to establish a large CNVR program capable of sterilizing 45,000 animals per year. In addition to gaining experience in replicating the CNVR Field Clinic in a rural setting, TMAWT will now gain experience in implementation in an urban environment. Such an environment brings its own set of challenges, e.g., traffic, high density, and a different mind-set: in a rural setting there is often a higher level of tolerance for community/street dogs, while in an urban environment, many just want the dogs to "go away." It is especially important to introduce same-day release methods in urban environments. Conventional sterilization techniques and mindset require keeping the dogs for up to five days to recover. In addition to the added and costly additional logistics, people get used to the absence of the dogs, and upon return they become very noticeable, often leading to objections because the community thought the dogs had been removed.

TMAWT dog catchers will be sponsored by RSPCA and Humane Society International to train municipal dog catchers in Kuala Lumpur to use humane catch techniques and dog handling for their sterilization program.

Based on the experience TMAWT team members gained in responding to India's flood disaster in Vishakapatnam - VSPCA, TMAWT has been identified as a "Go Team" that can respond to emergencies and disasters in the region.

# Financial Donors 2005

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## Pillar

Humane Society International  
World Society for the Protection of Animals

## Gold

Animal People (USA)  
Best Friends Animal Society – Tsunami Fund (USA)  
Patricia Kent Meehan Foundation (USA)

## Silver

Dr. Elaine Ong & Dr. Chris Barton (Australia)

## Sponsor

Wereld Asielen (Netherlands)

## Sustaining Donor

Blackash Pty Ltd (Australia)

## Affiliate

The Buddhist Maha Vihara (Malaysia)  
Mrs. D. A. Falconer (Australia)

The Bay Team (USA)  
L. F. Rourke (Australia)

## Associate

Martiza & John Byrne (Australia)  
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Ms. Janice Emich (USA)  
Our Lady of Sion College – Catholic  
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E. C. Berjaya Pty Ltd (Australia)  
Ms. Elaine Ebaugh (USA)  
Lee Evans-Disalvo (USA)  
Ms. Audrey Gould (USA)  
Ms. Sue Rountree (USA)

## Friends

Ms. Betty Amsden (Australia)  
Mr. Michael Ash (Australia)  
Mr. John Bassett (Australia)  
Ms. Pat Byrnes (Australia)  
Carol Cemey (USA)  
Ms. Monika Gardner (Australia)  
Mr. Gold (Australia)  
Mrs. Wendy Du Guesclin (Australia)  
Ms. Lisa Hill (USA)  
Patricia J. Kettlewell (Australia)  
Elisabeth MacLeod (Australia)  
Mrs. Varini Massillamany (Australia)  
Ms. McDonald (Australia)  
Joan & Graeme Pilley (Australia)  
Ms. Sue Quartermain (Australia)  
Mrs. Wendy Sharpe (Australia)  
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Ms. Vanessa Moyle (Australia)  
Ms. Dawn Payne (Australia)  
Dr. & Mrs. John Poretelli (Australia)  
Ms. Lisa J. Reardon (Australia)  
Sri Lanka Express Foundation (USA)  
Mrs. Wratckso (Australia)

# *In Kind Donors & Facilitators*

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Austrian Samaritans (Austria)  
Bali Street Dog Fund (Australia)  
Dr. Chris Barton (Australia)  
Bayer (Australia)  
Blue Cross – Dr. Chiny Krishna (India)  
Cessnock Veterinary Hospital (Australia)  
Chadbourne & Parke, LLC (USA)  
Dr. Eric Davis (USA)  
Ellavale Engineering (Australia)  
Dr. Charles Foster (Australia)  
Dr. Joe Galbally (Australia)  
Dr. Jenny Hibble (Australia)  
Intervet New Zealand  
Ms. Robyn Ireland (Australia)  
Dr., Nigel Kittow (New Zealand)  
Ms. Vicky Lacy (USA)  
Dr. Natasha Lee (Malaysia)  
Dr. Kerry Levin (USA)  
Greta Lloyd – (Australia)  
Lyppards Victoria (Australia)  
Maureen Mc Donald - Telerah Dog Training Club (Australia)  
Claire Mclaven (England)  
Carolyn Maquire (Australia)  
Matamata Veterinary Service (New Zealand)  
Mentone Veterinary Hospital (Australia)  
Merial (Australia)  
Caroline Mort (England)  
Norbrook Laboratories (Australia)  
Novartis (Australia)  
Dr. Elaine Ong (Australia)  
Pfizer Animal Health (USA)  
PROimage Pvt Ltd (Sri Lanka)  
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Rosebud Veterinary Clinic (Australia)  
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Therapon Pty Limited (Australia)  
Louis Trist BVCS (Australia)  
VMS New Castle Division (Australia)  
Jenna Wade (Australia)  
Karen West (Australia)  
Ms. Tracy Windler (UK)  
Dr. Rebecca & Mike Weight (UK)  
Wonthaggi Newhaven & Inverlock Veterinary Clinics (Australia)  
Yudisthira – Bali Street Dog Foundation (Indonesia)

# 2005 Honorary Members

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In recognition of those who contributed financially or in kind to the immediate response provided by the Tsunami People-Animal Welfare Coalition in the early days after the tsunami.

Ahimsa Foundation  
American Humane Association  
Animal People  
Animal Welfare & Protection Association  
Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights  
Headlines Public Relations  
Best Friends Animal Society  
BlitzAds  
CitiHealth Imports  
Egyptian Society of Animal Friends  
Eukanuba – Topline Imports  
Humane Society International  
In Defense of Animals  
Juanice Girven  
Keells Foods Pvt Ltd  
Frontier Automotive - LandRover  
Lucy Trust  
Sathva Mithra (Friends of Animals)  
Marchig Animal Welfare Trust  
Ministry of Health – Dept of Public Health Vet Services  
Noah's Wish  
Tsunami Animal Aid of Western Australia  
Union Traders  
Wereld Asielen  
World Society for the Protection of Animals

Several of these organizations collected donations on our behalf from multiple individual donors, to whom we are also deeply grateful.

# One Volunteer's Experience

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I arrived in Colombo on the 21st November 2005. Ishan and Gamini of the TMAWT team were waiting patiently for me. From the moment we drove out of the airport I felt that my fortnight in Sri Lanka was going to be an experience. What I didn't realize is what a positive one it would turn out to be..

The team was based at Hambantota along the south east coast. The devastation from the tsunami almost a year on was still painfully apparent as we drove along the coast. Along the way I spotted a number of stray dogs along the road. Some in little packs, while other solitary dogs trotted along sniffing for anything to eat.

It was an eight hour drive to the house where I met the rest of the team who were all very welcoming and friendly. I felt at home straight away. The accommodation was basic but comfortable, although the toilets took some getting used to—an eastern squat toilet.

I was warned about the food being a lot of rice with most of the meals from breakfast through late dinners to be quite hot and spicy and not for the fainthearted! For me, it all added to the experience and I was excited to share in the different aspects of the vibrant culture.

For the first week the TMAWT team worked in an establishment for tsunami victims who had lost their houses and were now living in temporary little wooden houses. One of the tents was set up next to the playground, and the operating 'theatre' was set up under the shelter of the common room shared with the three wheel tuk-tuks and some curious onlookers!

I knew the TMAWT team had been working together for almost a year. However, I was still surprised at how efficient and organized they were. Everyone knew what they had to do, all pitching in to help when they had finished their jobs. The work was hard but rewarding.

I am a veterinary nurse and think the standards (SOP's) in the field clinic exceed a lot of small animal practices with regard to sterility and cleanliness. From the way the instruments are cleaned, to the way the animals are prepped for surgery and neutered, is an achievement of which the TMAWT team can be proud.

The second week TMAWT moved to the beach. It was almost surreal. The tents were pitched below palm trees, the warm sand under our feet and the beautiful calm sea was only a few meters before us. After a hard day of work, it was gratifying to wade in the waters after the dogs had been safely returned to the locations where they were originally caught by the dog catchers who used a large style butterfly net.

Unfortunately, not all were satisfying moments. A couple of bitches had to be euthanised because they suffered from severe venereal tumours that were so bad maggots were eating away at the dead flesh. It wasn't an easy decision, all the vets decided together and evaluated the chances for a quality of life without suffering. Both bitches were very underweight and the tumours were inoperable. One bitch also had a rope tied around her neck that may have been put there as a pup, but she'd outgrown it so much that it had cut into her neck, creating open wounds. For both of them it was the kindest option.

My fortnight in Sri Lanka went by far too quickly. I felt privileged to be part of such a dedicated team. During my visit, Sri Lanka was battered by monsoon rains which caused flooding in parts of Colombo and neighboring areas. TMAWT responded to a cry for help from a local dog shelter that had been flooded during the freak storm. The team spent seven hours driving through the night to help. No-one complained, it was part of what the team did, and the drive was filled with laughter and songs the whole way there.

During my volunteer period, I learned that the TMAWT Team had been working with only two-third it's regular staff, as four Team members had been called to respond to the cyclone disasters the devastated the Vizakapatnam SPCA in India.

I arrived in Sri Lanka not knowing quite what to expect. I left with many photos, many breathtaking moments, and many new friends. For anyone wanting to be a part of the TMAWT, I say 'go for it'. The tireless work they do is just one of many organizations that is making a difference, not only to the life and health of the animals, but also to the education of the people around the world.

I miss the team, and was quite taken aback as to how sad I felt when the time came to say goodbye. But I know their good work continues, and one day I hope to be a part of it again.

Candice Bloom



# *For More Information*

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## **Contact**

Sherry Grant  
Sherrygrant@grantland.com

Dawn Peacock  
peacockdawn@gmail.com

[www.tsunami-animal.org](http://www.tsunami-animal.org)  
[tsunamianimal@gmail.com](mailto:tsunamianimal@gmail.com)