

Sarah's Charity Update- The story so far....



It is now four years since our first trip into the challenging world of charity work abroad and I can cheerfully say I do not regret it! It has been hard work but rewarding on so many levels.

It all started with a holiday to Turkey in 2006 when it became apparent that despite having a huge feral cat population nobody was caring for them. In other words, at the end of the tourist season animals were poisoned or left simply to starve to death.

Many countries have successful trap, neuter, release schemes which are run by charities. This means that colony numbers become stable, there is less fighting and disease. I decided enough was enough- I would help this area get a neutering and treatment scheme underway.

Trip One – The Turkey Experience starring Sarah and Charlotte

Huge amounts of support- financial and emotional- from all our lovely clients and local businesses resulted in a very successful fundraising effort. The plan with this trip was to treat as many street cats as possible whilst sorting out the politics involved in managing it as a permanent yearly project. The trip was memorable for several reasons. Firstly, it does not seem to matter what country you are in, there are always people who will generously give their time to help- I regained faith in humanity! Secondly, it was amazing how many cats just two vets and a handful of cat catchers could treat in a week. Thirdly, I got electrocuted in the shower!

Trip Two – The Not Turkey Experience

The team were assembled- this time good friends Del, Lorraine and Nikki, the dates were set, the donations were generous. The plane tickets were about to be booked and then it all went a bit wrong! Red tape and threats from a Turkish vet who had not wanted to be involved on the last trip (he feared we were stealing his patients-as if we had the time to do any private vet work!) resulted in us having a team up and ready but nowhere to go. Fortunately there were plenty of charities in need of help, and we settled on the Prodean Cat Sanctuary in La Linea, Gibraltar who desperately needed some help.

It was a very successful trip- the team managed to treat 142 cats. Richard and Emily who run the sanctuary were brilliantly organised and had a team of experienced cat catchers which made the whole operation very efficient.

Trip Three – La Linea 2008

A new year, a new team. This team involved two of our very experienced nurses, Trudy and Lauren, plus my husband Richard who is also a veterinary surgeon. Richard and Emily were very happy to have us back to continue the good work started the previous year. This time animals treated included Princess, a kitten who would have died had it not been for our teams' hard work. She required an operation on her hip and has since grown into a lovely cat and been rehomed. Total numbers treated, including several dogs, came to 160.

Trip Four – La Linea 2009

Del very kindly agreed to head back to Prodean for this trip, with Lauren and Stacey in tow. It was another eventful trip with the usual hard work and laughter. Eileen was this trip's extra special cat who had damaged her eye very badly. We thought this trip might be a bit cursed as the plane had to land in Malaga due to fog and Stacey's bed collapsed on the first night. Fortunately things settled down after this and the team got to work. A record 170 animals were neutered and treated this time!

The Future

We aim to continue supporting The Prodean Cat Sanctuary by sending a team at least once a year. This involves ongoing fundraising and is totally dependent on donations. The pub quizzes and cake sales seem to still be the most popular – I cannot think why!

If you are a vet or a vet nurse and can donate a week of your time then please contact Sarah at Toachim House Vets on 01795 531313.

If you would like to support us in any way- making cakes or jam, holding a quiz, running a race or simply by donating some money then we would be very grateful. Please contact Sarah at Toachim House Vets on 01795 531313 or by email on sb@thvs.co.uk.

