

MERRIGANG

[place of wild dogs]



Message from the Executive Officer

Since our last newsletter, AMRRIC has seen significant consolidation and progress in its programs. From the **Aboriginals Benefit Account project to multilingual education resources and dog health programs from WA to QLD**, our work has impacted positively on animal and public health in many remote communities.

President Ted Donelan and the EO had a positive and constructive meeting with Minister Jenny Macklin, federal Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. AMRRIC is enormously grateful for FaHCSIA's continuing support, and the Minister discussed further funding to extend over the next few years.

Our 2012 Conference is scheduled for 12 and 13 October in Armidale. Dr Wendy Brown, AMRRIC Member and Senior Researcher and Lecturer in Canine Science at the University of New England (UNE), has secured tremendous University support and sponsorship for the Conference, including hosting by the Oorala Aboriginal Centre.

Our relationship with UNE has also led to a wonderful partnership with the Tiwi Islands, with UNE students, AMRRIC and Dr Stephen Cutter working together on the Tiwi Dog Health and Education project.

Julia Hardaker

EXECUTIVE OFFICER



above: The Pilbara team: vet student Jennie Crosby, Dr Fumi Tokonami, Dr Stephen Cutter, and Environmental Health Officers Gabrielle Campbell, John Aitchison and Barry Edgar.



above: Typical community dogs – the suckling bitch was desexed during the five day program.

Dog health in the Pilbara

AMRRIC's work reaches far beyond the borders of the Northern Territory. In April, Program Manager Dr Jan Allen coordinated a veterinary team and three Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) from the Pilbara Meta Maya Regional Aboriginal Corporation to deliver a dog health program in the remote West Australian communities of Punmu and Kunawarritji (NE of Newman).

AMRRIC board member and Darwin vet Dr Stephen Cutter was joined by Dr Fumie Tokonami, veterinarian for the Animal Welfare League QLD, Jennie Crosby, a final year veterinary student from the University of Sydney, and EHOs Gabrielle Campbell, John Aitchison, Barry Edgar.

During the five day program, the team

desexed 40 dogs, and all dogs received Ivermectin treatment for parasites. The Pilbara Meta Maya group played an excellent liaison and support role, talking with community members and collecting the dogs that had permission for desexing.

For first time volunteer Jennie Crosby, it was an "amazing experience".

"It had been 3 years since Punmu and Kunawarritji had last been visited by the veterinary team and to our delight, the effects of the desexing and Ivermectin campaign were still obvious," she said. "Most of the desexed dogs were in much better body condition than the non-desexed dogs, and the prevalence of mange in the population was remarkably low."

Another program is planned for the remote Pilbara communities of Cotton Creek and Jigalong in June – the enthusiastic Fumie has already volunteered to be part of the vet team again.

contact us //

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ABA in East Arnhem

The ABA project is also up and running in East Arnhem Shire with keen candidates trying out for the Shire's new Animal Management Worker (AMW) positions.

The candidates include Valphon Fry, Tony Gununganyuwuy, Lawrence Banburrawuy and Neil Djangjan. They received initial orientation and training from East Arnhem Shire vet Dr Emma Kennedy and AMRRIC Project Manager Dr John Skuja in Milingimbi and Ramingining. Two of the Milingimbi Animal Management Worker candidates flew over to "Ramo" to start building team connections between the remote communities. They participated in training on zoonotic parasites (those that can affect human health) and getting familiar with the tools of the trade, including accurately drawing up and measuring medication doses.

Valphon, Tony, Lawrence and Neil assisted with the collection of dogs from the community and their preparation for desexing. The surgical removal of tumours from two dogs was also performed, a positive indication of the success of the previous work done by Emma Kennedy. As the majority of dogs are already desexed and population growth is under control, there is now time to tend to the health needs of individual animals – a major step forward. It will be the AMWs job to work with the vet and monitor and maintain the work undertaken.

below: Lawrence Banburrawuy and Neil Djangjan from Milingimbi worked with Dr Emma Kennedy and AMRRIC's Dr John Skuja to learn about the role of Animal Management Worker.

bottom: Valphon Fry assisting East Arnhem Shire vet Dr Emma Kennedy.



Animal Management Worker Ashley Hayes (left) working with Barkly Shire vet Dr Malcolm McGrath.

Barkly Shire's new AMW

Congratulations to Ashley Hayes – the first Indigenous Animal Management Worker employed full time by the Barkly Shire.

Ashley was one of the first participants in the Aboriginals Benefit Account (ABA) project. AMRRIC Project Manager Dr John Skuja said Ashley has developed his skills and knowledge so well, he is now an integral part of the Barkly Shire Animal Management team, working closely with Shire veterinarian Dr Malcolm McGrath.

A key part of the ABA project is the employment of Animal Management Workers within participating Shires. The 14 funded positions provide a tremendous opportunity and AMRRIC is delighted Ashley is filling the first of these positions.

Ashley is from Ali Curung – literally "Dog Place" – and has travelled with the team

to nearly all Barkly communities and is keen to take his learning and the job further. His role has included working on video projects to further promote the Animal Health Program in the Barkly.

The ABA Project is starting to have an impact. Philippa Major, Barkly Shire Government Business Manager based in Ali Curung, said,

"I am more than happy to report that the program is being very well received and I have noticed a marked improvement in the number of sick and hungry dogs around the community. a number of community members agreed to have dogs put down they could no longer look after or that were homeless. It has also reduced the number of female dogs coming into season – I can only assume this from the reduction of noisy dogs at night. There is still a long way to go, however it is a very positive start".

NEWS

The AMRRIC Manual 'Dog Health Programs in Indigenous Communities' (ideal for Environmental Health Workers and Animal Management Workers) plus 'Caring for Dogs, Community and Country' DVD are now all on one CD @ only \$45 (including postage). Find the order form on the AMRRIC website: www.amrric.org

The 2012 AMRRIC Conference – *Outback dogs: challenges and solutions for Indigenous communities, animals and public health* – already has a varied and stimulating line-up of speakers confirmed. Put 12 and 13 October in your diary! The University of New England at Armidale, NSW, is providing generous support for the conference, including hosting by the University's Oorala Aboriginal Centre.

Education Officer Dr Sophie Constable and board secretary Geoff Irwin are travelling to the Canadian city of Saskatoon in Saskatchewan this month to present at the First Nations Dog Management Conference hosted by the University of Saskatchewan. AMRRIC is known in Canada, and the organisers are keen to hear about our work in Australia.

Marking new territory in the Barkly

Driving around town camps with young Indigenous artist Dion Beasley taking snaps of local dogs has been just one of many activities undertaken by Project Coordinator Ktima Heathcote to kick-start a new AMRRIC project in Tennant Creek – the Barkly Education Resource Strategy, funded through the NT Animal Welfare Fund.

Dion, whose Cheeky Dog designs feature on AMRRIC T-shirts, and his carer Joie Boulter, wanted to capture for the project the many four-legged friends that have inspired his drawings.

A local with a background in journalism, Ktima will work alongside the community



above: Project Coordinator Ktima Heathcote with EO Julia Hardaker planning the Barkly Education Resource Strategy.

to create new arts-based resources, from posters and paintings to animation and talking books. She has hit the ground running to achieve her goal of facilitating sustainable and culturally sensitive messages about dogs.

Ktima is liaising with local organisations including Barkly Shire Council, Barkly College (primary and high schools), Papulu Appar-Kari Language Centre, Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation, Anyinginyi Health

Aboriginal Corporation and artists from the Pink Palace.

"I will soon be holding workshops with teachers at the Tennant Creek Primary and High School to create posters for a talking book and animated films," said Ktima. "Dion and Joie will work on a community pamphlet, and an already established resource, Be a Friend to Your Dog, will be translated into local Aboriginal languages."

Utopia update

ACT veterinarians now provide regular support for dog health programs in the Utopia communities northeast of Alice Springs.

One of the veterinarians, Dr Kate King, said while she grew up in the northwest of NSW, as soon as the team pulled into Arlparra, the service community for the Urupuntja homelands, she realised "we were in an Australia I knew little about".

"The local people live in scattered outstations, coming into Arlparra for supplies from the general store, high school and government services. English is their third or fourth language and definitely not their preferred lingua franca. I felt very inadequate with the paltry few words of their language I had laboriously memorised", she said.

The Urupuntja Health Service transported, fed and housed the team of vets and nurses from Canberra and AMRRIC staff Drs Jan Allen and John Skuja. The animal management team from Barkly Shire –



above: The ACT veterinary and Urupuntja Health Service team. One hundred and eighty-four dogs were desexed in the week at Utopia.

Dr Malcolm McGrath, Brian Radovic, Ashley Hayes and James Bonney – worked with the vets.

By the end of the week 184 dogs had been desexed. The week before, the Barkly Shire team had treated many more with Ivomec "sandwiches" – the best way to give oral medication for mange and other internal and external parasites. The ACT team could see real improvement in the coats, condition score and health of the dogs they desexed and treated in September 2011.

But Kate said desexing dogs was only half the work. Initially the team travelled to various camps to talk about the services



above: ACT vet nurse Geraldine Wickham in the temporary surgery.

on offer. Community members helped by holding the dogs for sedation before they were transported back to the surgery at Arlparra.

Everyone acknowledged the extraordinary support of the Urupuntja Health Service. "Without their personal support – think muscles, 'troopie', language, and supply of difficult to obtain necessities such as oxygen and disinfectant – we could never have done the job", said Kate.

See ABC coverage at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-03-31/vets-travel-to-nt-for-dog-health-program/3925210?section=nt>



right: Dr Sophie Constable, AMRRIC Education Officer, is producing outstanding multilingual resources in a growing number of communities.



above: ACT veterinary staff organised a trivia night to support their Utopia communities dog health program – the event raised an impressive \$5,500.

Talking books spreading the word

Through the support of Shire vet Dr Emma Kennedy, Anna Sri, Daisy Wulumu and many other Yirkala residents, the East Arnhem Shire Talking Book is now completed and in community.

Education Officer Dr Sophie Constable says the Ti Tree Talking Book is also moving towards completion with the last voice recordings completed. Permission has been granted to put the Ti Tree Talking Book online via isee-ilearn, giving the book, with its important education messages about caring for dogs, an even wider audience.

In Queensland, the Mornington Island community has just commenced work on their own talking book, with pages already done on flea, tick and worm treatments, and ringworm – including traditional plant treatments.

Safety around camp dogs

AMRRIC Administration Officer and professional animal trainer Eileen Fletcher delivered a well-received dog awareness session in March to staff from the Northern Territory Department of Children and Families mobile outreach service at Casuarina.

Eileen talked to the mix of health professionals and community liaison staff attending the workshop about staying safe on the job, including reading canine body language, understanding dogs' motivations and information about zoonoses, diseases carried by dogs that can impact on human health.

AMRRIC staff have enormous experience and expertise and are available to deliver tailored training seminars to government, corporate and non-government organisations – email Eileen Fletcher on eileen@amrric.org or phone (08) 8948 1768.

ACT fundraiser

Over 220 people crowded into Canberra's Jamison Southern Cross Club in February this year to raise funds to send a veterinary team to the Utopia Aboriginal communities near Alice Springs.

Vets and veterinary staff from the ACT, including AMRRIC members Dr Kate King and vet nurse Geraldine Wickham, organised the successful event, raising a very impressive \$5,500 on the night from ticket sales, an art auction, silent auctions, mystery envelopes and guessing competitions. Thanks to Michael Raby from LJ Hooker, who auctioned donated Aboriginal art works on the night.

In total, the group has already raised \$12,000 and the funds form a firm basis for ongoing, twice-yearly veterinary services to the Utopia communities' dogs. Dr King said the ACT group is excited about what they can achieve working with AMRRIC.

"We have already purchased another gas anaesthetic machine and installed it at Utopia so visiting veterinarians can provide the same high level of care to desert dogs as they would to Canberra's pampered pooches," said Kate.

! JOIN AMRRIC

Membership not only provides critical support to AMRRIC, members receive full access to AMRRIC website resources, including Dr Samantha Phelan's "Conducting Dog Health Programs in Indigenous Communities - A Veterinary Guide".

If you would like to become a member, please complete an online membership form and post it, along with the fee, to AMRRIC, PO Box 1464, Nightcliff, NT 0810. Download at: <http://www.amrric.org/2007/11/15/become-a-member>

? HOW YOU CAN HELP

Every contribution from our donors and supporters helps make sustainable dog management a reality in remote communities across Australia.

Donations to AMRRIC are tax deductible and it's easy to become a regular monthly donor. To donate, visit our website at www.amrric.org or call us on (08) 8948 1768.

