

Dog Rescue Center Samui

Brigitte Gomm
112 / 35 Moo 6 Bophut
Koh Samui
84320 Suratthani
Thailand
Tel: 066 77 413 490
Mobile: 066 1 893 94 43
E-Mail: info@samuidog.org
Website: www.samuidog.org

Dear Animal Lovers

April 2005

Sometimes it seems unbelievable how fast time passes. On 1 April 2005 we celebrated our sixth anniversary; on the same date two years ago, we also opened the big animal shelter in Bahn Taling Ngam so we had two reasons to celebrate. Ritchie Newton, a popular Elvis impersonator on the Island, sang for us and presented his new CD (with no Elvis songs!). In our homepage under 'Info & News' you can see some pictures of our celebration.

Thanks to your support we have accomplished a lot in the past years. The big animal shelter is almost finished: in the 7,500 m² area there are 12 large enclosures (with many large dog kennels) and we have 44 cages for dogs after castrations and accidents. We have also build a house with a two-room apartment for the vet, toilet, open-air kitchen, surgery, and a room for the cats (with its own outdoor enclosure). We have 70 cats living permanently with us there. The name **Dog** Rescue Center Samui (DRCS) has not really been appropriate for a long time. Cats are my favourite animals so I am pleased we are able to treat and neuter them. Unfortunately, to date, we have had insufficient funds to build a second cat house but I'm confident that will happen soon, so the cats will have a better living area and we will be able to separate the sick from the healthy ones.

Help us to build a cat house!



Since the foundation of DRCS on 1 April 1999, a lot has changed for dogs and cats on Koh Samui. Due to castrations, thousands of dogs and cats have not been born and, therefore, the Government ceased the mass poisonings a long time ago. All dogs and cats on the Island are treated free of charge, whether they have an owner or not. Every animal brought in or picked up is treated for free and, if necessary, kept as an in-patient during treatment. We could not have carried out this tremendous task without your help and so our **thanks go to all of you**, especially those of you who have been supporting DRCS for many years. Isn't it great what we have all accomplished together? Every little donation has contributed to achieving so much in such short time! We will

continue to rely heavily on your help in future as we are not supported by the Thai Government (they leave us alone which is great) and we get only a little help from the hotels and businesses on the Island. We have a continuous flow of new animal lovers to support us at our shelter and, with their help, it is possible to undertake small projects (fences and kennels) at the big shelter. The cost of dog and cat food has risen steeply in the last year because the number of our dogs and cats increased a lot. We have to feed some 250 dogs and 80 cats daily and there are the feeding places at the homes of reliable Thais. The monthly food bill is approximately 1,700 Euro.

**Don't forget the dogs and cats on Koh Samui!
They continuously need your help!**

Short recap for new members: up until April 1999 there was no vet on Koh Samui. Animals died helplessly at the side of the road after accidents. Even small bite wounds almost always ended in death because nobody cared for the wounds, and the dogs died slowly and painfully because of the maggots. The number of puppies born was immense and the Government conducted mass poisonings twice a year. In April 1999, DRCS was officially founded and employed **Dr Somsak**. When Dr Somsak became self-employed after a year, we hired two new vets (**Dr Sarawood** and **Dr Boy**) who worked with us for about a year but their performance waned over that time and we had to give them notice. Afterwards we reverted to using Dr Somsak for initial treatment, emergencies and two castrations a day. Dr Somsak charged us the full price for everything with no discount. It was not always been easy to come up with that amount of money.

When we finished the big animal shelter two years ago, we hired a new vet (**Dr Jo**) who was with us from July 2003 to December 2004. He was good, did six castrations a day and treated all emergencies with expertise. Unfortunately, he tried to cheat on us with forged bills and we had to let him go without notice. He now has his own clinic in Lamai. From January 2005 to March 2005, we had no vet so we worked with **Dr Utit Kamwut** and **Dr Sasiwimol Puthkhiew** of the Samui Animal Hospital in Chaweng. All emergencies and castrations were treated there. The cost of vet services is very high on Koh Samui, hence the reason for hiring our own vet again. In some other regions of Thailand, castrations are about half of what they cost on Koh Samui, but we are at the mercy of the vets here and, if we want to help the animals, we have to pay the very high prices. A castration costs about 30 Euro at the Animal Hospital and Dr Somsak charges the same. I thought that prices would go down after more vets started up their businesses, but that was wishful thinking.

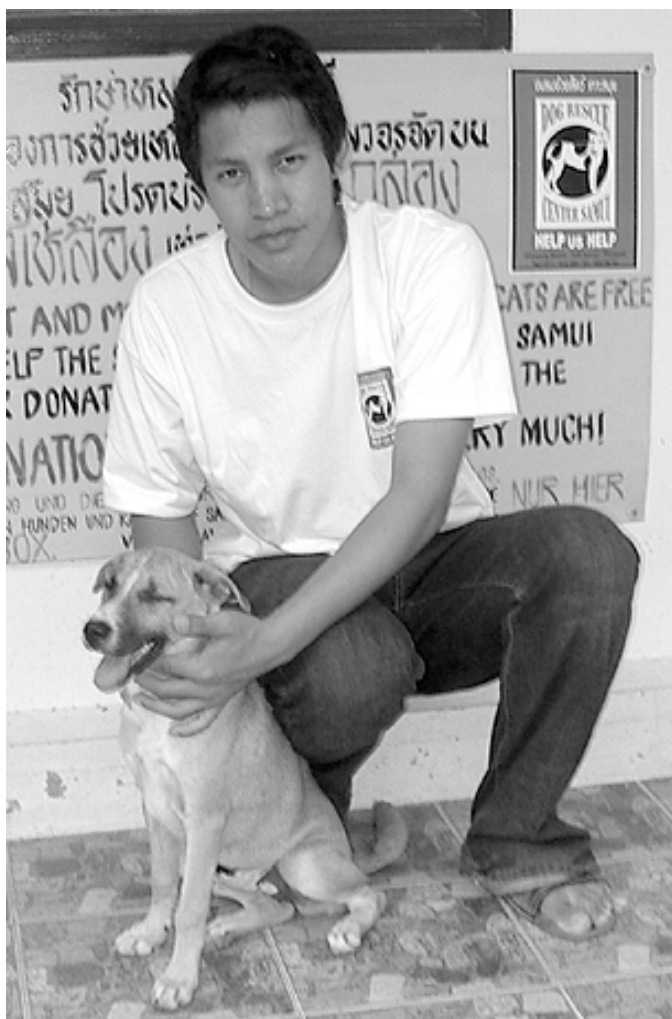
Given that a Thai averages 5 Euro in daily wages, many cannot afford to take their sick animals to the vet as even simple treatment costs up to 10 Euro. DRCS offers free treatment for all dogs and cats on Koh Samui. Many locals and foreigners living here take advantage of this service and come to my house in Chaweng at consulting time (three times a week). For the rest of the week, the vet is at Bahn Taling Ngam. We do hope, however, to receive donations from the animal lovers whose animals we help - even poor Thais donate small amounts for the treatment of stray animals. It costs 20 Baht a day to feed and treat a dog or cat at our shelter. Look at our homepage (www.samuidog.org). We have many new dogs looking for a sponsor.

**Help the dogs and cats on Koh Samui.
Become a sponsor for a dog or cat.
Sponsorship costs 15 Euro per month.**

As almost all of our helpers were trained by Dr Jo, they are able to set up infusions, give injections and medication, so we can carry out many procedures without a vet. This saved a lot of money during the time we had no vet. Many thanks to Dr Jo for his very good training of our helpers.

It was not easy to find a new doctor for DRCS. **Dr Pradjak** seemed very suitable but only stayed for a week until he realised he was not up to the task. He told us he had 10 years' experience. I don't know what he meant by 'experience' but it was not in the neutering of dogs and cats or in the recognition of illnesses. First, he rearranged the whole surgery and then installed the television! He could not explain conclusively why he needed a television in the surgery but I suspect he put the

sofa in there in the evenings as that's the only room in the building with air conditioning. When I asked why the surgical lights were no longer above the operating table, he didn't seem to care. After that, he and I decided to separate! I do not know what kind of ideas Thais sometimes have. It still surprises me! It had taken several weeks to recruit **Dr Pradjak** and, after realising he was not the right person, we had to re-advertise as all the previous applicants had found other jobs.



On **1 April 2005**, **Dr Tom** (Jukavuth Somboon) started working with us. He seems to be very good and I hope that he will get used to the work quickly so that we can again carry out six castrations a day. He seems to be highly motivated and tries to accomplish his tasks here. If he is not quite sure about a diagnosis, he reads about it in books in the evenings.

Dr Tom is 24 years old, from the Province of Roiet in Isan, and newly graduated from the Konkaen University in Bangkok. Dr Somsak was also a novice six years ago when he started with us and he became a good vet in a very short time. The helpers are trained very well and will be able to support Dr Tom in many ways.

I would have preferred a vet with experience but these vets are almost always married with children and it is vital that the vet lives on the grounds of the shelter because the risk of burglary is too high (during the time without a vet the hired security guard cost 100 Baht (2 Euro) a night). A vet with children cannot live there because dogs constantly run around the compound which would be too dangerous for children.

This is **Tina** from Denmark, our main volunteer at the big shelter. I would love to put in pictures of all our volunteers but there is no room. The volunteers have helped establish the big shelter, take care of and love the animals. Since January 2004, Tina has worked with us every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and makes sure all runs smoothly. It is important a 'farang' (foreigner) is at the shelter as this motivates our Thai staff enormously, else they would take a short snooze between tasks in the air conditioned surgery. My thanks to all the volunteers; without them, it would not have been possible to come so far in so short a time. Everyone is welcome to visit us and, if you have the time and inclination, there is always something to do: the dogs and cats love to be stroked and cuddled.





I got to know a new volunteer, **Petra**, in January who lives on the Island and enjoys taking pictures of dogs and cats. She owns a very nice camera and is a good photographer. It is not easy to take pictures of animals because dogs and cats are usually not very co-operative. As soon as you set up the picture, the animal immediately starts to clean its fur or lick itself. I needed to carry out a full census of our animals and would have never managed this on my own because as I am very busy having to oversee many many things. Petra worked independently and the job went particularly quickly when there were enough helpers and volunteers around. We spent almost two months on that project: during the day we took pictures of the animals and in the evenings we worked on them at the computer.

We had to download and log the pictures the same day they were taken or it proved very difficult to remember the individual animals. We had to compare each dog with its existing record card to confirm its identity. As there are up to 40 dogs in some of the enclosures, we applied a new method of photographing each dog: after we had taken a dog's picture, it was moved out of the enclosure to the large walled-in area in front of the house. Many of them did not want to leave the well-known enclosure and the catching of them was not always easy. After having taken all the pictures, we put the dogs back and most of them happily complied (they recognise it as home). However, some of them enthusiastically played the game 'Catch me if you can' and the helpers were sweating quite a bit during that game. The whole project took a lot of time and personnel but it was worth it. After six years we finally had a complete census of all our dogs and cats at the big shelter. We still have to finish off with the animals at my house but Petra does not have much time at the moment so that task will have to wait for a little while.

As a result of the census, we found we had a lot more new dogs and cats! These animals were never registered in our record cards or their pictures taken. The reasons for this are many: some came as puppies and we never took a picture of them. Dogs with mange grew back their fur and often it was not possible to recognise the 'new' dog with the poor creature first admitted. My camera hasn't been working lately and so it hasn't been possible to take up-to-date pictures and match them to the old pictures. Sometimes, after catching a dog for neutering, we realise that it is not strong enough to live on its own so it has been put into an enclosure WITHOUT A PICTURE AND NAME (where would we keep it otherwise as it cannot stay in the a single cage for ever!). If I cannot find a dog, the helpers always tell me that it ran away. If I track down that dog in one of the enclosures, the helpers laugh and are as happy as I am that I've found the dog. Sometimes dogs jump over the wall to the next enclosure and, as a result, can be chosen by two sponsors. If a fight breaks out, the helpers often move one of the offending dogs to another enclosure without letting me know. If a dog does run away, I don't worry too much as most of them are strays and like life on the street; anyway, all our dogs have been neutered before the escape (male dogs have a greater tendency to run away than females). If a dog dies, the helpers usually tell me about it. I am at the shelter every other day and if the dog does not have a record card with picture, the helpers show the dead animal to me, because they understand that I get very angry otherwise. If the dog already has a record card, the helpers should write it on the card and inform me as well but I cannot always rely on that. Maybe some dogs have been rehomed without me knowing!

After the census, I informed almost all the 'godparents' of their missing wards and apologised citing the above possibilities for 'losing' their animal. To those of you who got that e-mail, I am really

sorry and hope you will choose another animal and continue to support DRCS. Although some of our older animals 'got lost', we do have many new ones and are certain that some of the 'new' ones are 'old' ones and we haven't realised it. Just yesterday, Allison identified a dog which had received a new name – the dog had come in with hardly any fur and had no photo taken but it was because Allison had bathed and de-ticked the dog so many times that she could still recognise her two years later (their eyes met and the rest is history ...). Look at our homepage, specifically http://samuidog.org/shelter_eng.htm and you will see the animals in the different compounds.

Silvana from Switzerland has donated a microchip machine and microchips. Thank you very much Silvana! We hope to microchip all the animals soon, but only when we can tell for sure who is who. At the moment we only chip dogs headed for Europe or North America as photos make the identification of dogs much easier for us (you don't need to catch the dog). Of course, new dogs are always coming in and it's a lot of work to keep updating the photos. In the past six years we were not able to take proper pictures of all the dogs and I have told you in detail about the desperate trials in my last newsletters. Now we have taken pictures of all the animals and each of them has a record card with picture and Petra will endeavour to keep the records and photos up-to-date. We have many beautiful dogs and cats! It is a pity that transporting dogs is so expensive. Whoever is interested in the new regulations for imports to Europe and my experiences, can find the information in our homepage ('What we do' - dog transports).

This month, **Allison** (from Scotland) is on holiday and has been helping me with the office work: English correspondence and bookkeeping (input of income and expenditure into the computer, etc). I would not know what to do without her. When my husband and I were in Germany over Christmas, Allison managed the shelter in December and **Janine** (from Switzerland) took over in January. They lived in our house and mastered their tasks. It sure was a funny language class for both of them: the English-speaking ability of our helpers is still very 'limited' (ie almost non-existent) and the Thai education system is lacking in that respect. How can some helpers not learn any English at all? **Wit**, our manager, has proved to be the best manager we have ever had; a year ago when our former manager (Don) left, I thought I wouldn't find a better person and I've been proved wrong. Wit's English is quite good now, but Don, did not speak English well, even though he had worked in a bank. In Thailand one speaks Thai and that's it. At government offices one is not understood unless one speaks Thai. Only the tourist police speak English. In rural areas people look at you uncomprehendingly if you ask for directions in English. But that doesn't matter, Thais are always ready to help and with a smile you can go a long way.

On 26 December the terrible Tsunami destroyed many coastal areas of Phuket. Allison organised transport of food to the disaster area and Wit drove with 250 kg of dry food to Phuket and gave it to Mrs Margot Park (www.soidogfoundation.org). This was the only relief organisation in that area of which I was then aware and so at the end of December I asked all animal lovers on my e-mail list to help this organisation. I received 11,000 Euro from the Dutch Foundation to help in the disaster area on condition that I provide invoices and personally assure the correct use of the donations in Phuket. DRCS also received 5,000 Euro from the Dutch Foundation. Thank you very much Diny and I hope you feel better soon (she is recovering from a difficult operation).

On 20 January, Petra, Wit, Allison and I drove to Phuket in two cars with about 450 kg of dry food and dog cages. We went to Phuket with best intentions as I wanted to help Mrs Park and discuss how to spend the 11,000 Euro (I was responsible to the Dutch Foundation for that money). I brought a list of 15 vets who had applied for the current vacancy at DRCS as I thought she would be happy not to have to look for a vet herself. To cut a long story short, the visit turned out full of unpleasant surprises. Mrs Margot Park of Soi Dog Foundation threw us out when I asked her about the current and future use of the donations. She told us that it was none of our business and she was not willing to answer any questions. Her website had stated she had collected over 55,000 Euro in donations within the first three weeks after the disaster. One day after our visit, she took the record of donations off her homepage. I told you about my visit on Phuket in my e-mail in February 2005. For those of you with no e-mail and would like to receive this report, please contact me. I can also send it again to interested parties (by e-mail). I have nothing to add to my report of February. For those of you who gave directly to Soi Dog Foundation, it is your money! Ask Mrs

Park what she has done with it! I am no longer interested what Mrs Park does. I have enough work on Koh Samui and will not waste my energy. I did learn something from all of that - I will not ask you again for any help for an organisation I have not personally reviewed on site. Some animal welfare organisations think that dogs and cats are in no need of supervision after neutering and put them back on the street 24 hours after surgery. This is the Catch Neuter Release Programme. I call it the Catch and Kill Programme. Mrs Park from Phuket subscribes to that programme.



Hello I'm Mökio and after six months at DRCS I can't believe how well I am. I had given up and, without DRCS, I wouldn't have survived much longer. I'm too old to look after myself. Now I am one of the top dogs here, the food is good and I get lots of cuddles. What more could I want?

It would have been a pity if I had had to return the 'tsunami' money destined for Phuket so I reacquainted myself with a small organisation in the disaster-affected area of Koh Payam which cares for dogs and cats. The Dutch Foundation agreed that I give the money to the Dog Rescue Center Payam (DRCP) but only with the proof of invoices. The Rescue Center is on the small Island of Koh Payam near Ranong. Maggie Albiez from Switzerland had lived there for two years and desperately tried to get the dog problem under control with contraceptive injections. She founded DRCP (www.payamanimalcare) and I will try my best to help her improve the living conditions for dogs and cats in a very short time. The Island was affected by the Tsunami but fortunately there were no casualties and everybody ran to safety in time; only a few people were missed temporarily. The Island is 13 x 5 km and there are no roads or cars, the paths are narrow and can only be used by motorcycles (there is only one motorcycle with sidecar on the whole Island!). Electricity is produced by generators and one can use the telephone only in the village but not always! Back to nature! As the generators are turned off during the night, there are no fans in the very basic bungalows. I can already picture myself chasing half-wild dogs through the mangrove marshes in the rainy season on Koh Payam – it's lucky I love crocodiles!

On 1 March, Mogens Hansen from Denmark made DRCS an interesting offer. He is vet who, with his team, has conducted mass neuterings in several countries; currently he has 30 vets and some vet nurses who are willing to travel to Thailand in October. Immediately I thought of Koh Payam and Mogens and I discussed everything by e-mail. He is willing to send as many doctors as needed and he and his team want to spend four weeks neutering dogs and cats; however, these animals have to be caught and there was no organisation capable of doing that on Koh Payam. If Mogens and company come to Koh Payam, the neutering of the animals will certainly not be of a problem, but how can we catch 100 dogs per day and keep them for a week before returning them home? Maggie told me there are about 500 dogs on the Island so that means we have to catch 100 dogs per day on five consecutive days! Also, we cannot forget about the cats!

We will care for the dogs on Koh Payam after neutering and not put them back on the street 24 hours after surgery, leaving them to their fate. Maggie will cover her garden to make shade and some of the post-operative care will be done there. As Maggie knows every house and person (a lot of Burmese live there), she is confident many of the locals will look after the animals carefully in the post-operative week. I have no doubt we will be successful with a small catch and care monetary gift (1 Euro per dog or cat), and it won't be a problem to find many helpers who will bring animals, take them back afterwards and watch them. If everything is okay after one week, the Euro will be paid. We will have fliers printed for the locals and distributed all over the Island. In October (best time to visit because of the rainy season!) we will go to Koh Payam with many helpers, several cars, two motorcycles with sidecars, cages and even more rain jackets. This summer I will give you more information about the plans for our little Tsunami disaster relief project.

We couldn't use Mogens' kind offer for Koh Samui as catching more than six dogs a day is not possible. Even though we constantly distribute leaflets (in English and Thai) advertising our free service, and we had our television campaign, we still have problems collecting more than six dogs a day. We put our fliers up at TescoLotus. This is a huge supermarket and every Thai eventually goes to it even if he/she only wants to look. At the weekends, teenagers meet there and whole families wander in astonishment through the aisles gazing at all the different kinds of merchandise. Maybe the Thais are too lazy to call us or help us catch dogs. Maybe I should try to pay prize money for each dog caught! However, on the other hand, our vet's consultations are well attended.

We generally keep all dogs and cats at our shelter for at least a week after neutering to keep an eye on them. Even animals with owners are only exceptionally allowed home early. Because of my six-year experience in this field, I have learnt that there are some 'stupid' animals which rip out the stitches and by doing so kill themselves if they are not treated immediately. These animals die a dreadful death because flies lay their eggs in the wounds, the maggots hatch and kill the dogs in a slow and cruel way. I have seen such infected wounds after neutering! The whole belly is full of maggots and the dog has to be put to sleep because the inner organs have been eaten.

I get many inquiries from animal lovers asking which hotels on Koh Samui are dog-friendly. It can be difficult to answer these questions because a new manager can change everything. If he does not like dogs or is bothered by the complaints of dog enemies, he will remove the animals from his resort and beach area by whatever means! It is quite easy to find out about the dog friendliness of the hotel of your choice: ask if there are dogs at the beach and if it support DRCS by allowing us to put up a donation box in the reception area. If your question is not answered, that means it is not interested in guests who like animals. When it comes to putting up donation boxes, paying guests always have more influence than DRCS. In many hotels, animal loving guests there help us by influencing the hotel to put up a donation box or display some information material. However, even that seems to be a big problem for some hotels; maybe some of the managers think that tourists are all blind and do not see the dogs. I can achieve very little in that respect - I am either not received at all by managers or they ask me come to the hotel at 8:00 am and then they do not have time. I stopped going to the hotels to beg years ago. Write to the hotels; animal friends are paying customers! You have the ability to make a change. If you want an almost complete list of hotels/resorts, I can send you this. On the DRCS homepage you will find links to tourism on Koh Samui. There you will find extensive information about many hotels. We have worked a lot on our

homepage www.samuidog.org. Under 'Information' and 'News' you can see pictures of Phuket after the Tsunami, the Government's dog shelter on Phuket, Koh Payam and, last but not least, photos of our sixth anniversary celebration.



Please excuse the sometimes very late answer to your e-mails. I am interrupted by 1,000 other things and must also be prepared for nature's forces in Thailand (no electricity, not enough electricity for the computer, no telephone, etc). If you are on Koh Samui, I always look forward to you visiting our house. The dogs are always very happy to get attention. If you want to bring something because you have room in your luggage, please let me know ahead of time.

Our monthly costs are some 4,500 Euro (dog and cat food alone is about 1,700 Euro per month). We hope we can count on your continued support so that we can accomplish even more in future. Our efforts to make Koh Samui animal friendly have made it a nicer and safer place for tourists and I am glad about that. Our four-legged (and some three-legged) friends thank you very much.

Thank you very much for your help.

With best wishes

Brigitte

Further information for sponsors you'll find on page "How to help" of our homepage