

Dog Rescue Center Samui

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Dear Animal Lovers!

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Seven and three are very lucky numbers in Thailand so this is an extra 'lucky' anniversary for us in that it's the seventh anniversary of the setting up of the Dog Rescue Center Samui (DRCS) and the third birthday of the opening of the shelter at Ban Taling Ngam. Well done you for giving us the 'tools' to set up DRCS and our big shelter. For supporting our work, the dogs and cats on this Island are forever grateful to you. No longer do the females have to have litters twice or even three times a year so the Island is no longer littered with sick and dying puppies and kittens. Likewise, because DRCS brought the first vet to the Island, any stray dog or cat is treated for free so it is a rare occasion indeed that you see a dog lying by the road, untreated. If a dog or cat is hit by a car or involved in a fight, someone will telephone us (meanwhile, not only tourists but also a lot of Thais call us) and off will go one of our helpers in the chariot (well, a motorbike and sidecar) to collect the animal. Of course, all dogs and cats with owners are treated for free as well. Thank you, thank you, thank you for helping us help the animals on Koh Samui.





The helpers are playing "Odd man out": Everybody has to go around the chairs as long as the music is playing. Every time the music stops...



...every one has to sit down on a chair. The point is: There is always one chair less than the number of players. The winner is who sits on the last remaining chair.



„Mr. Coconut“ Edgar Murray is singing for people and animals...



...and Dam, Janine, Sandra and Angela are swaying with the music.

THAI HELPERS

I am delighted to tell you that Dr Sid is still with us and that we are still very pleased with his work. Without any fuss or hassle, he carries out six castrations/spayings daily and has integrated well into the team. He has no difficulties delegating work and supervising the treatment of the dogs and cats. Moreover, he has a very special empathy for the animals: the sick puppies are kept warm with water bottles (now with the electric pad I've given him) and have been given teddy bears to play with. The dogs with mange (some of them come to us completely furless) now sport T-shirts during the rainy season.



That's a lot better! Nike and...



...Schneewittchen do not have to freeze anymore.



Unbelievable! That miserable I looked in ...and that's me today. Ain't I beautiful?!
November...



Every time the doctor comes to Chaweng we ...because Dr. Sid takes us out one after the
are put in a cage... other for treatment.



In the past four months, we have had the inevitable turnover of staff with two of our helpers leaving and another four having been employed.

EM, the 18 year old son of DAM, now lives with his father in Bangkok. Em had great difficulties coming to work every day and, as a result, ended up just working part-time with us! Consequently, Dam has decided it would be better for Em to be 'encouraged' to work harder by his father. When Em did deign to appear for work here, he was always a diligent and interested helper so I wish him all the best in Bangkok.

Dam is the only female on the team and she mainly works as a maid at our house in Chaweng - 50 cats cause a lot of dirt and need much medical attention.

DAENG, a quiet and tidy worker, also gave notice. Daeng was only the second employee (after Dr Tom) to tell me personally that he wouldn't work for DRCS anymore. Two motorbikes had been donated and these could be used privately by the helpers to go to and fro work. Daeng got one of these. When the floods hit us in November/December (see 'DOG TRANSPORT UNDER DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES'), we learned fast that motorbikes are not suitable for driving through deep water. The heavy rains continued on into January and Daeng decided he could use the motorbike for diving! WRONG! The next day he presented a bill of 500 Baht to me. When I told him that he should have treated the motorbike with more care and took it away from him, he gave notice. I wish him well for the future.

One of our new helpers is PIT. Pit is 49 years old, comes from Nakhon Sri Thammarat, is married and has three children. He first started working in our house and, after a settling-in period, he was supposed to – among other things - dispense medicine to the sick animals. After a while, I found out that he was not very familiar with this work as Dam had been delegating the jobs she didn't like, e.g. mopping up and cleaning windows. As one maid in the house is enough, Pit was assigned to the cat room and cat house in Ban Taling Ngam. Unfortunately, this idea too did not

work out: one of the most important duties in the cat room is to clean and disinfect the empty cages so that no germs can linger. Pit obviously thought this a meaningless task and only cleared out the cages. When I asked him why the cages hadn't been cleaned neatly, I got the usual answer of "Mai kau dschai" (I didn't understand). The cages in the cat room are for sick and post-operative cats and it is very important that the cages stay germ-free; otherwise the cats could suffer an infection that might be fatal. It was unacceptable for Pit to carry out this work so ineffectively and I was about to fire him. However, our manager WIT stopped me and suggested I give Pit the work in the single boxes. This duty is easy to understand and less complicated and, I thought, something Pit could handle. No such luck! The next time I went to the big shelter, I found the dogs in the single boxes still waiting for their first bowl of food at 4 pm! Because Pit doesn't have much of a chance to find a similar paid job, has to provide for his wife and children, and was trying hard (he is indeed trying), Wit convinced me again to give him a last chance. So, thanks to Wit, Pit is still with us.

In the beginning, WIÄNG also had difficulties in comprehending the flow of work but he is currently working in the single boxes without any problems. Now and then he is still a little rebellious, but I have learned that almost all elderly Thai men are like that. On the other hand, some can be very subservient and walk around me in a crouch (the head must be lower than mine). This is almost embarrassing!

We have also employed three young men: BANG, SAWAI and IET. Bang is from Nakhon Sri Thammarat, 24 years old, married and has two children. Sawai is 20 years old, also from Nakhon Sri Thammarat, and is also married with two children. Iet is from Nakhon Sri Thammarat, is 20 years old and single. All of them have made a good first impression but it is too early for any final decisions. Unsurprisingly, none of them has a driver's licence or is registered on Koh Samui. Because they are not registered here, they have to get their licences in their home city. This means another 500 Baht and travel costs that I have to pay each as the helpers usually cannot afford this.



Iet, Pit, Sawai and Bang

Without a driver's licence, none of them can drive any of our vehicles as they would not be insured. I sometimes ask myself if anyone on this Island (except the DRCS helpers) has a driver's licence! No worries, all of them are good drivers – also with sidecar and dog! Here, motorbikes are driven by children who are so young and little that they hardly reach the foot break.

If these new helpers prove useless and have to leave, it will be no problem to find new people; there is always someone lying in wait to work at DRCS. I only have to tell the helpers that we are looking for someone and the next day somebody knocks at the door.

DOG TRANSPORT UNDER DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

In December, Koh Samui suffered long and heavy rainfalls and many parts of the Island were flooded - the police had to use rowing boats on the Beach Road of Chaweng! Many hotels had to close temporarily and some houses in the mountains could not be reached because of the landslides. The water flooded our garden and the dogs had to be evacuated to the back terrace and on to the bamboo benches in the big dog kennel. For those of you who have visited us, you can imagine what the Laem Din Market looked like: a big lake appeared and everybody was scrabbling around, trying to save what was possible. Luckily, the water on our ground drained off after one day and the dogs resumed their old places in the yard. At the shelter in Ban Taling

Ngam the water did not cause much trouble as we had constructed many small walls and drains and we are constantly working on their improvement.

Around this time, Natalie from Germany arrived to pick up her beloved Kylie who had had to sit out the 4 months' quarantine time in Ban Taling Ngam (have a look at "dog transports" on our homepage). Natalie had just moved into her hotel in Lamai when it started raining and, in a very short time, Lamai, as well as Chaweng, became flooded. Natalie was able to move neither forwards nor backwards. Moreover, we had problems taking Kylie from Ban Taling Ngam to Chaweng. The workers fought their way through to the shelter by car, ploughing through deep water and taking detours. One of the vehicles conked out and had to be repaired but finally we managed to get Kylie to Chaweng. This was one day prior to the expected date of departure but, unfortunately, Natalie was still stuck in Lamai. Since it wouldn't stop raining, she bravely set off and by walking and swimming she got her way to the main road where she got picked up by one of the few cars still on the road. The car (with Natalie) made it over the hills from Lamai to Chaweng but then Natalie had to get off and go swimming again! No, I am not kidding, the water was one metre high in places! At a travel agency, Natalie was told that the airport was closed and could not be reached by phone. Natalie moved into a hotel in Chaweng and swam the rest of the way to our house and was delighted to greet her beautiful Kylie.



This used to be a bridge.



Natalie is going for a walk with Kylie.

By now, Natalie and Kylie were stuck in Chaweng, there were no flights off the Island and, on top of that, their tickets had become invalid. Three days later, the situation eased up and Natalie headed off to Germany together with Kylie. Still, the nightmare was not over. Here is the e-mail Natalie wrote after her arrival in Germany:

'The flight to Bangkok was all right even though I had to buy another ticket for Kylie. The night in Bangkok was not all right as we spent most of it on the street. Kylie was totally stoned from the sedative she had been given and was barely able to walk. Dog on drugs! Early the next day we went to the vet who demonstrated the complete range of his abilities: he took Kylie's temperature and a photo. That was it!

'So, after a long sleepless night, bitten by mosquitoes, with a load of forms, a lot of good will and a smile on my face, I went with Kylie to the Airport. She was looking forward to getting into the cage as she only wanted to sleep. I arrived at the LTU desk and thought I was about to cross the finishing line. WRONG! The little Thai woman behind the desk smiled her lovely Thai smile and said: 'Solly, cannot find booking.' I do not want say further what happened then but all I can say is that this little Thai now knows a lot of German swearwords. Don't get loud in Thailand, my a***! I have achieved more in this moment than I have during the last few days.

'The arrival in Germany went without a hitch; the customs officer glanced at the papers and the dog and then gave me his phone number because I was such '... a nice person.' Thank you!

That was the story of Natalie and Kylie which luckily has a happy-ending. Unfortunately, some people living on Koh Samui had a lot of bad luck and lost their houses. The rainfalls were the heaviest in 20 years and turned into a flood because of the deforestation of the mountains and the buildings being erected on the beaches (preventing drainage). Many people were aware of this problem but nothing was or has changed. Deforestation and building is not about to stop.

PROJECT LAMAI

For many years now Silvana, our No 1 sponsor from Switzerland, has been especially worried about the dogs in Lamai. When she comes to Koh Samui she stays in Lamai and takes care of the beloved four-legged friends. Because she wanted this care to continue even when she is not on the Island, she collected donations in Switzerland to enable us to employ two more workers who will check the dogs in Lamai regularly. One helper earns 6,000 Baht a month and, when he does a good job, he gets a 1,000 Baht monthly bonus. Only the helpers who are familiar with the work and well trained can carry out this work. The work there includes rabies and other vaccinations, mange treatment, dog catching for castrations, wound treatment and, of course, advertising the work of DRCS. We have flyers in German, English and Thai and these are supposed to be spread so widely so every last Thai and foreigner knows about our work. Sandra lives in Lamai and will control the work in the afternoon and supervise the helpers.



Silvana (front) with some helpers vaccinating a dog in Lamai.



... and another 50 Baht

On 15 March, Project Lamai started. Our helpers are supposed to be there from 1 pm to 5.30 pm. When there are no more dogs to catch in the daytime, our helpers will go out in the evenings (twice a week). Dr Sid was on leave from 16 to 18 March and the helpers in Lamai were not expected to catch any dogs for castration/spaying then. However, they came back joyfully with two dogs as Silvana had promised a bonus of 50 Baht (1 Euro) per dog. It's funny how the news of a potential bonus is remembered but the one not to catch dogs for two days isn't!

The Lamai team is only supposed to do vaccinations and carry out wound and mange treatment for which, on Day 1, I prepared everything: cooler with vaccines and antibiotics, and bags with tick and flea collars, vaccination tags, Betadin (antibiotic cream), anti-maggot powder, etc. It took me almost two hours to supervise the packing. When I came home on Day 2 at 3 pm I found that the helpers had taken only the bag with the flyers! Why do I still get surprised by this sort of thing! On Day 3, the helpers managed to take everything I had packed and when they came back in the evening were anticipating starting to catch dogs the next Monday. The following days were quite successful.

When there are no more dogs to catch after night trips in Lamai, we will – as far as financial constraints allow – expand the project to other places. Then, weekly controls should be enough to get a grip on Lamai. We will, of course, continue to catch as many cats as possible and, for cats, the bonus is also 50 Baht (about 1 Euro).

BUILDING PROJECTS

After my Christmas holidays, on my first trip down to the big shelter, I was dismayed to find the toilet so dirty. The toilet is used by both the doctor and the helpers (there is a door on the outside and a second door leading to the Doctor's bedroom). I realised immediately that Dr Sid could not be living there anymore because the operation room was lovely and clean but the bathroom had never been so filthy. As always I was the last to learn that Dr Sid has found a house in Maenam for him and his family. The helpers acted totally surprised when I asked them if they knew that Dr Sid had moved out. Will I ever get used to the dishonesty of the Thais? I don't think so.

Knowing that nobody was staying at the shelter, I was worried about the safekeeping of the medicine and the expensive equipment in the operation room. There are also drug addicts on this Island and I am sure they could find something appropriate among all the medicines. SOMKIAT, one of our helpers, is very good in welding and I was very impressed at his art work. He made wonderful ornamental grilles for the windows and a steel grille door for behind the wooden door of the operating room. I would love to see the faces of burglars after breaking the lock and opening the door!

We have managed to surround all 44 single and double boxes with fences. That is good for the helpers as they can just open the door of the box and the dog can jump into alleged freedom. It is a lot easier to clean a box without a dog inside and for the dog it is more pleasant to walk around a little bit and 'stretch its paws'.

Before we had the fences welded by Somkiät, the helpers had to work with a big cage in which they put the dogs while cleaning the boxes. Nevertheless, the cage was not very effective because the dogs were not very happy to be transported from a box to a cage and back. After Wiäng – who doesn't know what it means to be scared of dogs – was bitten by one of the dogs, we could only get the dogs out of the boxes with the help of a second helper. One cleaned the box and the other held the dog. Because we do not have enough staff for this, very often the cleaning of a box took place with the dog inside. However, hard times for dogs and helpers are over and everybody is happy. The whole area is full of fences and I do not know where to build more fences for more compounds.

The puppy house, unfortunately, is still at the planning stage. Many things had to be done first and we weren't able to collect enough money. However, many animal lovers (whose names we will paint on its wall) have promised donations and, with a bit of luck, we will be able to build a bigger puppy house with a special Marchig Trust Room (we received a donation of US\$ 1,000 from the Marchig Trust) for the puppies with special needs. I will now try to find a developer for the house. On Koh Samui this is not easy since people are still building like crazy and the prices keep rising.

I hope to be able to tell you about the start of construction in the next newsletter.



We really need a home for our puppies...



...they are always so many.



Thank you very much again to all the sponsors and helpers from all over the world. Because of your help, EVERY dog and cat can be helped for free on Koh Samui. Stray animals which have not found a place to survive on their own on Koh Samui can be brought into the shelter. Every day we neuter at least six animals because of your donations. We offer free medical treatment for ALL cats and dogs (with or without an owner) including a pick-up service. About 250 dogs and almost 100 cats that couldn't make it on their own on Koh Samui have found places in the shelter over the past 3 years. Many of them are looking for sponsors to make sure that their bowls are never empty. Have a look on the homepage at 'HOW TO HELP', 'CATS AND DOGS TO SPONSOR'. Sponsoring a dog or a cat is 15 Euros monthly! Even when you do not want to sponsor an animal, it is certainly nice to look at the many dogs and cats and read their stories! Since the shelter in Ban Taling Ngam is very big and surrounded by a wall measuring 800 meters, you can still buy pieces of wall for 25 Euros. (Info: look at the homepage "WHAT WE DO").

When you come to Samui and want to bring something, bring old towels, white, green and pink lined index cards (A5 size), powdered kitten/puppy milk, cat de-worming paste, de-worming tablets for dogs (multiwormer), flea collars and flea/tick shampoo (for the dogs not the volunteers!). We can always use these things.

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

Every small donation helps us take one step forward.

Our monthly costs amount to 5,500 Euro. If you are on Koh Samui, you are cordially invited to stop by and look at our books. The dogs and cats always love visitors, and so do we!

Best wishes

Brigitte

Banking details for sponsors:
please see
www.samuidog.org - HOW TO HELP

