

Dog Rescue Center Samui
Brigitte Gomm
112 / 35 Moo 6 Bophut
Samui 84320 Suratthani
Thailand

Phone 00 66 77 413 490
Mobile 00 66 1 893 94 43

E-Mail: info@samuidog.org
Website: www.samuidog.org

Dear Animal Lovers

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On behalf of all the dogs and cats on Koh Samui, I want to thank you for all your faith and help over the years. Some of you have been sponsoring our work for over five years, even though it may have been quite some time since you were on Koh Samui; you must be so proud of everything that we have all done together. People help us in many ways, eg by sponsoring an animal, actively helping us at the shelter or by lobbying companies for financial support. One of you wrote to HM The King of Thailand about our work and, as a result, His Majesty asked his officials to check us out. An official arrived unexpectedly a month ago and announced that he was very happy with our work and promised to help us in future. I hope that help means we will be left alone to continue our work; Thailand has so many poor people that it has no spare money to help stray animals.

Six years ago we had no vet on the Island and today we have two. Both vets were brought to the Island by the Dog Rescue Center Samui (DRCS). Also we now have an animal shelter in which dogs and cats, unable to survive without help, can come and stay. Thankfully, in the last few years we have had more and more sponsors for our animals. Incidentally, if you know of hotels/bungalows on Koh Samui which are ill-treating the local dogs, please let me know. Some managers still feel it's their duty to continue to poison dogs so if you have come across this, please let me know. I cannot publish this information in my newsletter but I can be vague in my indications of their whereabouts.

Some of our newer members may be unfamiliar about our work so please visit our web site (www.samuidog.org) to find out more about us. Click on the 'What we do' and 'Where we are' buttons for the history of our development. We always try to keep our homepage updated but sometimes this is not possible. As we are in Thailand, we always have to fight the elements of wind and water with subsequent electricity cuts. After a storm or heavy rain, when you can only sail up and down the streets, it can take a while for the electricity to come back on. During your stay in Koh Samui you maybe didn't realise such problems because the big hotels have their own generators. We too have our own generator and, during the last blackout, we tried to press this into action. It didn't work and, when we investigated, we realised anything remotely soft had been eaten by the mice! **Sakda** and **Somkit** took the generator apart to salvage what they could but to no avail. I know I run an animal shelter but it's hard to love mice after they have eaten the generator.

Often in the evening our computer won't work because the electric power dips below 170 volts; this is the time I like to do most of the business work for the shelter. Unfortunately, that's not the only problems I've had with the computer. Just thinking about them makes me age ten years! Nothing seemed to be going well until June with new problems occurring every day. My husband, Werner, couldn't help out as he was in Germany from May until June. Prior to his departure, we bought a new computer because the old one gave up the ghost. Everything went well until we were attacked by a virus which made work almost impossible: frequently the computer would shut itself down giving me only one minute's warning. When that happened I must have looked as if I was playing one of these video games as I tried to save and close down the many programmes I had running, eg Photoshop, Excel, Word. It was panic stations as the clock counted down the seconds. Another problem with Windows I had was that the letters I typed didn't appear on the screen for some sec-

onds so the computer had to be rebooted. We never did work out what system the virus used to wreck our computer. Werner bought a new version of Windows and MS Office in Germany and installed these. Since the beginning of August, the computer has been fine but the printer has now decided to act up! It can only be used semi-automatically and that means I have to press the reset button after every sheet. For this information letter, I need to print out some 800 envelopes which means the reset button had to be pressed some 800 times. One of the helpers spent a whole day with me on reset button pressing duties but at the same times sorted all the envelopes into countries! Never have I managed to do so many envelopes so efficiently.

Because our computer wasn't working, I had problems answering your e-mails and some (or maybe many of them) got lost. I learned of this only by mistake when people e-mailed again to ask my why I hadn't responded. I also had such problems when I sent some documents to Hawaii; when I checked if my text had arrived, I found that my original e-mails had never arrived, even though my computer has confirmed their departure. If one of you has ever written to me and received no response, please contact me again. Maybe your e-mail has been eaten by a worm! Many strange things have happened to my computer and nothing surprises me anymore. Anything is possible. We (and WSPA) found out that our computer even sent e-mails out via WSPA's address book. This came to light when around 200 e-mails were returned to us as 'Receiver unknown'. Isn't it great what computers can do? Even if you get an e-mail, you cannot be sure that the sender even knows he's sent you an e-mail. Today's problem with the computer is more of a cat attention problem as Sweetie (<http://www.samuidog.org/adoption.htm>) is intent on lying over as many keys as possible as I write this.

During the coming weeks, hopefully we will finish our dog census and then will publish an index on the homepage showing where you can find your dog. As mentioned, we are almost done with the dog census; ten of our 11 compounds are already done. This sounds great but in Compound 4 there are 40 dogs and most of them are light brown in colour and all seem the same! In this compound, most of the dogs haven't stayed at my house in Chaweng so neither I nor the helpers know them as well as we do the others. There are many dogs in here which already have sponsors and we try our best to find out which animal is which from their photos. However, last autumn our camera broke so there are some dogs which already have a sponsor but we do not have a photo of it yet! Last year, when we started the census, we took photos of many of the dogs, gave them a name and number. As we got better organised, we found that three dogs already have two sponsors. I will inform the sponsors of this and ask them to pick a new dog. Sakda, who has been with us for four years, knows many of these dogs and is a great help in their identification. However, because of personal reasons, he has been absent from work for a while.

When trying to identify a dog for our records, it can be difficult as the dogs aren't always cooperative. When I go into one of the compounds, every dog wants to be the first to jump up on me and it takes a while before they all calm down. The dogs get so excited and run around and I'm left in a cloud of dust. It's fun being kissed by a 35 kg dog! When I identify a dog from our records, it's given a collar. Easier said than done – this is just a new game for the dogs and they have a great time running away (or eating each other's collars off). Then, I have to watch the dog carefully before it hides among another three dogs which look exactly the same. What fun! Oh how I laugh when this happens! With some of the dogs, I only have pictures of them as puppies and they are now adults. All dogs have great fun being hunted by the helpers. What a good game! The compound is about 800 m² big and there are always several helpers needed to catch a dog and put a collar on it. Some dogs growl angrily and bear their teeth when we corner them. Some of the dogs have had bad experiences with Thais and only farangs (foreigners) can catch them; but I cannot make photos and catch dogs at the same time. When we have collared a dog, the next game (for the dogs, not us) is the Photography Game: the helpers try to separate the dog from the crowd and get it in a good position for the photo. Once a dog sits there, smiling into the camera, what do you think the dog will do? It starts scratching! I think it's a type of shyness as all the dogs seem to do it.

The registration of the dogs takes an unbelievable amount of time and helpers, and both of these I do not have. However, all dogs which have not been identified have been photographed and, step by step, will be put on the homepage to attract a sponsor. I'll get there in the end. There is no other

choice. We have started to put plaques over the compound gates showing the name of each dog and its sponsor so it will be easier for you to identify your dog if you visit us personally. Also, potential sponsors will be able to tell if their preferred dog has a sponsor or not.

We have many dogs that still need a sponsor. Just click on our homepage (www.samuidog.org) under 'How to help' and you will find these animals.

**Help the dogs and cats of Koh Samui and be a godparent to one of them.
Monthly sponsorship of an animal is 15 Euro.**

Kuhn Goya, the daughter-in-law of the owner of the Tongsai Bay, visited me in the Ban Taling Ngam shelter in April to talk about TV coverage of DRCS on the new Samui TV station. The first episode was made and shown in July and will be repeated frequently. It was planned that every month a new episode of the DRCS story would be shown but it will take many months before the next segment is produced. As we are in Thailand, everything takes a little longer. I have never seen this film as I do not have cable TV but, because of it, many people have learned about our free-of-charge consultation and medication service every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

While Kuhn Goya was at the shelter, she asked me if there was anything urgently needed. She didn't have to ask me twice – we always need more single boxes. The 34 boxes we had were not enough so I asked her to help us finance more. She agreed to pay for five double boxes but our President couldn't find a construction company which would undertake such a small contract. We had to order ten boxes and were delighted when Kuhn Goya agreed to pay for all of these. These boxes cost 200,000 Baht (4,000 Euro). On completion, we will have 30 single boxes (150 x 90 cm) and 14 double boxes (150 x 180 cm). The double boxes can easily take three dogs (some dogs like company). I hope that, for the time being, we have enough boxes.

After we celebrated our 5th Anniversary in April 2004, we had another reason to party, this time on 15 July. Time has flown and it's been one year since Dr Jo started at DRCS. DRCS has never had a better vet and I hope he will stay with us for many years. The chances are good because he has settled in Koh Samui and has no problems with the helpers whatsoever. They get together after work once in a while for a party. I don't know what the exact reason is but it could be the charm of Dr Jo, the air-conditioned room or the disco atmosphere of the surgery. All the helpers want to be Dr Jo's assistant. For Thais, the family connection is very important and, as Dr Jo's family is in Surat Thani, he can go home every weekend. Surat Thani is on the mainland and is easily reached by boat. As Dr Jo lives at the big shelter, exceptional emergency cases can be treated any time. That was rarely possible with Dr Somsak because he could never be reached on Sundays - he wouldn't even open the door on those days. I can easily understand that he wanted his free time but, if it's about saving the life of a poisoned dog, he should have helped, even on a Sunday. Dr Jo will treat a poisoned dog at 2 am if it's brought to him. Because it's not very common in Thailand, I am delighted that Dr Jo has a heart for animals.

Please don't misunderstand me; working with Dr Somsak was very good. He answered all the questions from the helpers and was always friendly. Unfortunately, the treatment costs in the last years escalated: the price for sterilisation of a female dog rose from 800 Baht in 2001 to 1,500 Baht in 2003. We could only afford two castrations a day and all our sick animals were treated as private patients. All medication had to be ordered via Dr Somsak and, although the drugs are cheap compared to the western World, Dr Somsak gave us no discount. In the last month of our work with Dr Somsak, we paid him 150,000 Baht and that was typical of our monthly payments. Now, for the same amount of money, we can afford to employ an increased number of helpers, fund Dr Jo's salary and castrate at least six dogs/cats a day (nine helpers cost 6,000 Baht each per month and Dr Jo's salary is 35,000 Baht per month).

Until April 2003, we had no choice but to work with Dr Somsak because we had no clinic of our own. However, after that, the big shelter and the house were finished at Ban Taling Ngam but it then took us three months to recruit Dr Jo. It was very hard to find him because Koh Samui offers nothing special for Thai people - a boring, expensive island for tourists. For Thai people, palm trees

and beautiful beaches are not important. No Thai person wants to swim in the ocean if he/she is older than 8 years. So who wants to be a vet in Koh Samui when you can say in Bangkok. However, in Bangkok, the salary isn't so good and an employed vet earns no more than 20,000 Baht a month, with a beginner only getting between 12,000 and 15,000 Baht a month. With this sort of money, we couldn't hope to attract a vet to Koh Samui, hence the generous salary offered. So now we have Dr Jo and hope that he will stay a long time with us.

From mid-July 2003 (when Dr Jo started) until the end of July 2004, Dr Jo has carried out **821 neuterings** of female dogs, **281 castrations** of male dogs, **269 neuterings** of female cats, **94 castrations** of male cats and 36 other operations. This makes a grand total of **1,501 operations**.

With a Thai employee, you never know from one day to the next if he will come back tomorrow. I tend to find out by rumour and innuendo if one of the helpers will not return. I've stopped being surprised by this; Thai people do not like to confront problems and prefer to run away instead. I don't take it personally as I know from many business people and managers that this type of behaviour is completely normal.

Bin at 17 years old was our youngest member and said he goodbye 'Thai style'. **Sud**, our President and Bin's uncle, passed on the information that the work was too heavy for him and I just don't know how to respond to such a comment. The heavy work had come about after the dogs at the shelter had spent a particularly hard week digging as many holes as possible – the place looked like a Swiss cheese or like moon craters. Because I had forgotten to remind Rid to fill in the holes, he hadn't done it. So we had another 'party', this one for filling in the holes (with gravel and sand). Even Dr Jo joined in after surgery and we finished off the afternoon with a few sustaining beers. Everyone had fun except Bin who didn't want to join in and said that he only drank whisky. He was in a huff, it transpired, because I hadn't let him stay in Chaweng as the previous day, when he was alone in Chaweng, he had been caught sleeping on my sofa by some tourists. **Srong** also left without giving good reason and it was a pity because he was a good worker who genuinely cared about the animals. He was conscientious at the start but gradually this faded away and his days off (without notice) increased until it was too much to suffer.

It's not much of a problem to find new helpers for the shelter as they don't have to speak English; as the Island lives off tourism, most employers demand that employees speak English. Our dogs and cats don't care if a helper can speak English or not and the helpers speak Thai to me. Our new helpers are Ow, Dilek and Egg. **Ow** comes from Phitsanulok in the north of Thailand and, even though he is only 24 years old, he is married with three children. He has no motorbike licence which is a pity. He has been trained up by Dr Jo and is now able to treat the dogs and cats independently, ie cleaning wounds, giving medication, etc. He is very careful and gentle with the dogs and cats and I am happy with his work. **Dilek** is 22 years old and from Singburi in the north of Thailand. He too has no driving licence. Currently, Dilek is being trained by Dr Jo and learning a lot and I hope he will soon be finished. When I am sure that Ow and Dilek will stay with us for a long time, I will pay for them to return home to obtain their driving licences. Each licence will cost about 2,000 - 3,000 Baht (1000 Baht = 20 Euro) for its purchase and the travel to and fro the home town; neither Dilek nor Ow could afford this, hence DRCS has to foot the bill.

Rid always works at the big shelter because he lives in Ban Taling Ngam. From 9 until 11, he assists the vet until the workers arrive from Chaweng. After that, he works in the five big compounds. Two helpers clean the single boxes and one helper looks after the cat room, kitchen area and six small compounds. One helper with a driving licence always has to stay in Chaweng as people are forever coming with their animals for injections or wanting sick animals collected.

In the last month, there hasn't been one day when all eight helpers have turned up so I had to employ another person. We do not pay salary for the days someone doesn't turn up but we need at least eight people present to work efficiently. **Egg** is 21 years old, from Surat Thani and he has a driving licence! He started at the beginning of August so it's too early to tell what he'll be like. However, whenever I watch him, he's busy. All Thai workers are busy at the start and then they start to slacken off! If two people do not turn up for work, no-one can go out dog-catching. If we have no

dogs for Dr Jo, what will he do? However, up until now, we have always had enough work for Dr Jo and because we are well known on the Island, I try not to worry too much about collecting enough dogs for Dr Jo.

All the helpers are trained by Dr Jo and learn from him how to prepare the dogs and cats for operation, clean and tattoo the animals' ears, clean and treat wounds, cut nails, give injections and IV infusions, and taught how to hold dogs and cats while they are getting their injections. They also learn a lot about what drugs to give an animal if it's ill; however, it is Dr Jo who has the final say in what medication an animal gets. Some helpers are quicker than others at learning their vet nursing skills. In my opinion, Dr Jo's vet nurse training is better than that in Germany.

Wit our manager is a mean dog-catcher which he does with one other helper - a dog cage (with dog) is too heavy for one person. Dog catching continues to be one of the most entertaining events for the dogs on Koh Samui. Wit needs to be lucky to catch a dog – he may see a dog sitting in the same place every day but, rest assured, that dog will not be there on the day he wants to catch it. Some days he can drive for hours and hours trying find dogs to catch. Some dogs need a surprisingly large amount of Sedalin before they will graciously fall asleep. After Don left us last December, I thought we would never get such a good manager but, thanks be to Buddha, we got a better one. Wit has now been with us for six months and he's great. He speaks good English, anticipates problems, and has good ideas on the reorganisation of our work to make it more efficient. He is polite and an absolute gentleman. I enjoy working with him. As with most Thai people, he had problems at first supervising the staff and criticising their mistakes but he's now much better. Because Thai people are too polite to criticise others when they have done something wrong, they do not make such good managers, in my opinion, as farangs (foreigners) and that is why so many of the hotel managers are farangs.

One of our volunteers, Tina, tried for many days to catch a bitch which frequented her bungalow. Despite many methods of trying to entice the dog, she has still been unsuccessful. I cannot thank Tina enough for her never-ending work at the shelter. She has been with us since the beginning of January and works every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. At Ban Taling Ngam, she looks after the cat room, the puppies, cooks the rice, and cooks the fish for the cats, puppies and thin dogs. The animals prefer to eat rice because they are Thai! Tina also greets our visitors and shows them round. She is with us until the end of the year and I am so happy to know her. If you are near the shelter (either at Ban Taling Ngam or at Chaweng), we are always happy to see you.

At Ban Taling Ngam, we have increased our facilities for cats. As you know, I love cats but I have 20 in the house so it's now full. The cat room and the big cat enclosure in Ban Taling Ngam is perfect. The enclosure has lots of bushes and places where the cats can sleep in the shade and they love it. At the moment we have around nine adult cats and ten kittens between the ages of one and four months. All of the kittens came without a mother but have settled in and play in the cat room (biting my toes is a favourite). If we hadn't taken in these kittens, they couldn't have survived. Normally adult cats have no problem in surviving on their own because of the delicious variety of food on offer on Koh Samui, eg geckoes, mice, birds and other small animals.

As many of you will know already from me, unfortunately, many of the young kittens die from cat flu or they stop eating – they refuse to swallow. Many of the puppies die because they are too young to be vaccinated and pick up parvovirus, distemper or leptospirosis which is endemic in our compound. However, we are now having limited success in preventing this as we inject the puppies from the age of four weeks. Other good news is that we are starting to win the fight against ticks. We now inject every dog every month with Ivomec. This is the normal medication for mange but it also works against fleas and ticks. At the same time as injecting the dogs, we de-worm them. Between injections, we powder the dogs with flea and tick powder. This is a good job for volunteers as the dogs love the massage and the smell of the powder!

In the middle of July, Nembutal became unavailable. We used this as a narcotic anaesthetises the dogs for operation. The alternative is Zoletil which, until now, we have only used on cats. The cost of anaesthetic for a 20 kg dog is 50 Baht when using Nembutal; it is 400 Baht when using Zoletil.

That's eight times the price so since the middle of July we have had to pay 1,000 Baht a day more for the Zoletil. This has given me many sleepless nights. Dr Jo suggested anaesthesia equipment using gas and oxygen. This costs 250,000 Baht (5,000 Euro) but, after a year, the cost would be balanced out and the on-going costs equivalent to using Nembutal (20-50 Baht per animal). I applied to the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) for a grant for the equipment which required the completion of a complicated form (in English). However, a very short time after submission, I got a negative response stating that, because DRCS had been awarded WSPA grants in 2001 and 2003, it would not get any in 2004. Had I known that before, I wouldn't have spent valuable time organising the grant application, If WSPA can't afford to give me a grant two years in a row, how can it afford to send me 20 full-colour, glossy magazines on cat castration or about setting up animals shelters in cold Europe (not hot Thailand)? What am I meant to do with all this wasted paper?

Even though WSPA will not support DRCS to purchase the anaesthesia equipment, I hope that you will support me and continue to help our work here as the anaesthesia equipment has already been ordered! Life's a gas!

This is a small sample of our work:



Again many many thanks for all your help – my sponsors from all over the world. Because of you, every dog and cat on Koh Samui can now get free medical treatment. Stray animals which cannot survive on their own can stay at the shelter. Every day, because of your help, a minimum of six dogs and/or cats are neutered. I think it is wonderful what we have done. Do you know of anywhere else in Thailand which does this? Don't forget about the dogs and cats which still need your help. The monthly cost of DRCS is 4,500 Euro.

You can always sponsor a bit of wall: **1 meter of wall costs 25 Euro**. We will paint your name on your metre of wall. If you want to do this, please contact me or log into my home page for details. When you are on Koh Samui, please come and visit me and you are welcome to check our accounts and supporting paperwork. More importantly, the dogs and cats would be so happy to meet you (and jump up on your good clothes).

With best wishes

Brigitte

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