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Dear Animal Friends

December 2008

Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells, Jingle All The Way.... My goodness, it's Christmas time again, where has the year gone? It seems like only yesterday that I took the Advent calendar off the wall and now, here I am, putting up a new one. Well, it's actually the old one again, because here on Koh Samui you still can't find one anywhere. However, they do play Christmas songs and in all the big stores the Thais wear their bright red Santa hats. You can now find some terrible looking plastic trees for sale, in all colours, as well as the cheesy plastic balls to decorate them with. We will be away from December 20th - January 5th as we are spending the holidays in Berlin with my family. Allison from Scotland will be taking care of things here in our absence, she will be staying in our home, and hopefully she will enjoy her new bed buddy, Bonzo. She has done a great job in the past years for us, so we have no worries about leaving the DRCS in her capable hands again. Also, when it comes to the helpers, she is able to manage them effectively, which is not an easy task as only our manager, Wit, and Dr. Sid speak English. About a year ago, Allison went back to her country for good, but she will return again just for us. My husband and I are very grateful for her help. Of course Janine will be here to support her with anything that she might need, and at this point, I would like to say a huge thank you to our long term volunteers, Janine, Linda and Kelli for their undying dedication, especially in regards to the Temple Project.

In the last newsletter I announced that I will create a monthly video. At that time, I was unsure if we would be able to do this as I had no idea that Ulrike is blessed with the knowledge to create beautiful videos consisting of motion pictures and stills. Last May Ulrike was here in Koh Samui and took a lot of pictures and made quite a few videos. Especially her photo video of "Bonzo And Love" is hilarious and you really have to check it out! Meanwhile, Ulrike has edited 15 videos about the DRCS and Bernd and I have made 5. The 3 videos about Bonzo were also posted in English on YouTube, but for all of the others, there was no translation necessary. The videos will give you a clear picture of what's happening at our house as well as out in the shelter. If you have some spare time, you can look forward to over 2 hours of beautiful DRCS pictures and videos. Of course we will continue to post videos on YouTube for you to enjoy. Shortly after Christmas season 4 of "Bonzo And Love" will hit the theatres. The star of the show has asked for a higher salary, which we did consider, but have now refused because he asked for payment in sausages and ham. Since Bonzo has come to us last May, he has put quite a lot of weight on; so much so that we now say he is fat...he does not need the extra food. In his videos you can see how much effort he is putting into losing the weight as he is constantly displaying his sporting abilities on the beach.

<http://www.youtube.com/Dogsamui> and

<http://www.youtube.com/Samuidog1>



Of course there is not only Bonzo that lives in our house, he has 11 companions: Blindi (came to us as a puppy 10 years ago, born without eyes), Bibi (a biting poodle, but my favourite dog), Julie (mother of Josie), Josie (constantly yapping), Porky (arrived thin with almost no fur and many exposed scars), Seven (arrived without fur and terribly undernourished), Tappal (after being poisoned is now blind and has problems controlling her movements), Ollie (has major problems with eyes), Rusty (lost both eyes due to illness), Poldi (blind in one eye and came to us almost dead) and the puppy Nervi, which we'll be taking care of only temporarily, we hope that he will be picked up again soon!

12 dogs are definitely too many, but how could we say no. Every one of them was in very bad condition and needed immediate care and treatment. Believe me, sometimes this house is a hell on earth, a never ending chasing session. On top of this, we also have 40 cats who all share our 75 square meter living space. My husband and I are almost 60 years old and we hope that we will be able to survive this circus for many more years to come. I would like to point out that 12 dogs make a lot more noise, dirt and work than the huge pack of cats. We also often have the small dogs for a short time in our home because they are not strong enough to stand up to the big dogs at the shelter. These dogs are usually poodles or other little cuties which have been dropped off temporarily while their owners have work to do off the island. The price is only around 20 Baht per day, and since the only other animal babysitting service on the island charges approx. 300 -1000 Baht per day, we are the only viable option, especially for the Thai people who's average daily salary is around 250 Baht per day. We also often take in dogs who are soon going to other countries, and keep them in the house until their departure. A lot of future owners often want to test first how their new dog will behave with cats, so we introduce them to the cats in the house; So far all of them have passed the test. Unfortunately some of the smaller dogs often believe that they are descended from the wolf, so they circle a cat, chasing it, and that's when we have to put an end to the socializing.



As you can likely imagine, the world wide financial crisis has affected us as well. In July we were still getting 53 Baht to the Euro and now we are getting between 44 and 45 Baht and because of this, things are 20% more expensive. Just the other day we received a letter from "Macro" informing us that the 10kg bag of dog food will now cost 285 Baht where as last August it was 200 Baht. The dogs in our house have already started to complain because of my immediate action to save money; no more eggs in their food, a savings of 4500 Baht per month. For the cats at our house and at the shelter we daily cook rice with leftover meat and eggs. We also cook for the dogs in the single boxes, as well as the puppies. The stray dogs that come in off the streets are used to rice and food scraps, so they have trouble adjusting to our dry food, but in time, they usually do. The rice cookers keep breaking, and it's no longer possible to replace them, so we have gone back to the old way of cooking in big pots. We haven't cancelled the "fish party" for the cats in the house yet, as we are still getting

a big bag of fish for only 100 Baht, which is way less than tinned food. Of course, the price of the canned food has risen as well, and I have directed the helpers to use it sparingly when they are giving the medicine. No more handing out little bits of food here and there to the dogs with no medicine just because they give you the puppy dog eyes. The dogs keep destroying the transportation cages and because they cost over 1000 Baht each which is not affordable, Pui has begun to build us some himself. The new ones are heavier and cost more to make, but they are super strong and will save us money in the long run. We are trying to save wherever we can, but this is not always an easy task, as about 500 dogs and 200 cats wait every day with open mouths for their food.

The political situation in Bangkok has directly affected tourism and so there will be less tourists visiting Thailand in the months ahead. Of course we desperately need the donations from the tourists, without them; I worry about our financial future.

TEMPLE PROJECT

In October 2007 we started to feed the dogs at the temples. Since April 2008, our long term volunteers Janine, Linda and Kelli provide 16 out of the 28 temples on the island with food and medical attention. Everything would be perfect if we were not in financial trouble due to the world's economic crisis. The vaccines and food eat up a lot of money, and I am seriously worried about where the money will come from for this project in the future. We have now put up signs at the shelter letting people know that we must ask for money for vaccines given. Every day a lot of Thai people visit the shelter for treatment and medical advice.



Of course we will continue to vaccinate the stray dogs and we will continue to help out the less fortunate people as well, for as long as we can. All other treatments are still free for everyone.

10 kg dry food costs now about 6 Euro!
One vaccine for dogs costs about 3 Euro!
One vaccine for cats costs about 5 Euro!

Please support us with your donation for our Temple Project, without your help we will not be able to continue to vaccinate and to feed these animals.





A big thanks for the help and support over the years from; Marcus & Eva, Kathrin & Frank and Martina & Uwe, both here and abroad.

THAI HELPERS

These past couple of months we have seen a lot of turnover in the staff, nothing new, as you will likely remember this news repeated in the previous newsletters. Of the 5 new helpers I introduced in the last newsletter, there is only one left: GON is our survivor, he is polite, hardworking and I am very pleased with him.

Meanwhile, we have had several new employees who have only stayed with us for a few days. The new employees are: DON - after some early misunderstands, he has now settled in well and is in charge of maintaining the single boxes. We also have WIE, ROOD and KING who have just joined our team. They haven't been working long enough



Don, Rood, Wie und King – our new helpers

yet to properly evaluate their performance, as they have yet to face some pretty difficult tasks at the DRCS. We will see how many of these four will be left by April, but I can assure you, it will not be all of them. Unfortunately the moral of the team has gone down recently. On some days, 5 workers will just not show up. I don't mind a day off for someone who has a valid personal reason, but I never thought that the lack of commitment would continue or even get worse. At this time, we have enough people to do the job, but in the future, I will continue to employ as many helpers as apply for the job. In case they all show up one morning, I'm sure I will have enough meaningful work to offer, there is still an awful lot of repair work to do at the shelter. Whoever doesn't come to work won't get paid. Continued pay is only given after an accident at work. That's how it usually works in Thailand.

I have to say that during the rainy season the moral of the helpers has increased and there were even days when all of them showed up for work. It's probably got a lot to do with the fact that most of their homes are not so comfortable to live in during the monsoon.

It's not easy to train a new helper. A small example: If you want to hang up laundry, you first have to take down the already dried laundry. Not in Thailand: The wet laundry gets hung on top of the dry ones and hangs there until used. Not only one helper used this method and that makes me wonder if this is normal all through Thailand.

I have made the newsletter only 6 pages this month to make some space for a copy of our new flyer and because this is not the time when I have the luxury of spending more money than necessary. At the moment we still have a lot of stamps left, and we hope that in the future we will not have to save even more money and stop the mailing. The nicely colourful stamps are not available all year round, so when they first come out, I make sure to buy as many as I can.

Sometimes advertising can be really fun, like this year. We were part of the Oktoberfest Parade which was held in Lamai. Our most loyal supporters came to visit and have been spreading the word at the tops of their lungs. You can find more pictures of our Oktoberfest adventures on our homepage under "Info and News".

We were also fortunate enough to be able to have an advertising/awareness stall at the Global Mala event on September 26th. A lot of VIPs showed up to the event, creating even more awareness which can never hurt. We received some donations at the Mala as well.

RAINY SEASON

Once again we were all hit by the merciless rainy season. On the 13. November, the doghouse was completely flooded and on the 24. the spectacle repeated itself. Unfortunately the governments' effort to deal with the yearly water problem has once again failed. They have built a whole new road including sewerage at the Leam Din Market (where we live) without any success. The flood level was even higher than last year. The fact that the road building work is finished and hasn't helped a thing, I guess we will have to live with the floods, also in the future. There is only one way to keep the doghouse dry, we would have to make the ground higher. Unfortunately we don't have the money for it. The big shelter was also affected by all the water and the storms and more damage occurred. A lot of roof tiles were hit and destroyed by flying coconut palms. The tiles are over 6 years old now and therefore most of them simply shattered. For some of the damage I have no explanation for as there are no palm trees anywhere near by that could have dropped some nuts. I guess the Eternit-roof peaces can't hold forever and slowly but surely will weaken with age. Thanks to the donation from the Stichting Buitenlandse (Dutch Foundation for Foreign Animal Shelter), we were able to replace most of them before the rainy season started. But there was another horrendous storm in November and many of them were damaged again. One big palm tree collapsed and destroyed one of our fences and the roof of some single boxes. Despite the pouring rain, our helpers carried out the repair work and sawed the palm tree into pieces and removed it.



Unfortunately we do not receive a lot of support from the hotels. When we do, it's always the same hotels. Even after our presentation at the Thai Hotel Association in August, only hands full of hotels were willing to support us with food or even money donations. Nobody can pretend to have never heard about us before and it's well known by now that we are not prepared to tolerate poisoning on the beaches. I believe that many hotel managers would prefer if the DRCS would not exist, allowing them to "somehow" get rid of all the annoying stray dogs on the beaches and around the hotel areas. Twice a year the government would go around and poison the strays and the dog problem would be solved. Thankfully for many years, since the existence of the DRCS, there is no need for the government to do so any longer.



Seven is really lucky; he soon will fly to Dagmar in Germany.



We have some very sad news from our neighbour island. The animal rescue center PanganAnimalCare had to close down after an arson attack. Not long after the attack, many stray dogs were poisoned. At this point in time they are rebuilding the rescue center. Read more about it on the homepage www.pacthailand.org.

The animal rescue organisation in Hua Hin had to close down too. They kept having problems with the government and not enough donations could be raised to keep them going. We have given shelter to 4 dogs from Hua Hin which now lives at the DRCS in Samui. Read more about it on the website www.headrockdogs.org

PLEASE HELP, YOUR DONATION COULD STOP US FACING A SIMILAR SITUATION

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.

Because of your donations, we can still neuter at least six animals every day. We offer free medical treatment for ALL cats and dogs (with or without an owner, that doesn't matter) including a pick-up service. Of course we will continue to offer free medical treatments for animals with owners as long as possible but we are no longer in the position to offer free vaccinations. I know that these vaccines are important but at this point of time when we have to save wherever we can, I don't know another way around this. Rabies vaccine is still free for everyone. Compared to the multi pal, the rabies vaccine is still quite a bit cheaper.

A lot of stray dogs and cats that couldn't make it on their own on Koh Samui have found a home in our shelter. With a sponsorship you can help to make sure that their bowls are never empty. Have a look on the homepage ('How to Help', 'Cats and Dogs to Sponsor'). Sponsoring a dog or a cat is 15 Euro a month! Even if you do not want to sponsor an animal, it's definitely worth having a look at our many dogs and cats and read their stories! If you're coming to Samui and you wish to bring a donation: Old towels and bed linen and sheets for the puppies and the cats, OLD toys for the puppies, powdered kitten/puppy milk, cat de-worming paste, de-worming tablets for dogs (multi-wormer), and flea collars for dogs. We can always use these things.

Please check with your vet, if they have any old de-worming tablets or other medicine for dogs and cats to spare, which you could bring over when you come to visit the island.

Once again we were able to transport a few dogs and cats to a safer future. On our homepage you can check out those happy animals in there new homes at www.samuidog.org 'What we do' and 'Dog Transport'. In case you're willing to become a companion for a dog transport, please contact me in time. The animals will be thankful and surely the new owners too.

Support us by letting people know about the DRCS! Pass on the newsletter to your friends and family or spread word of the DRCS through different forums. I strongly believe if we all work together now, we can get through this crisis.

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 9,000 Euro. If you are on Koh Samui, you are cordially invited to stop by. You are welcome to come and look at our (financial) books. The dogs, cats and I always love visitors!

**Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year
(SA WA DIE PIE MAI)**

Brigitte

Banking details for sponsors:
please see

www.samuidog.org - HOW TO HELP

