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Veterinary Supplies Project

Evidence of Humanity is collecting supplies to send to charitable nonprofit 501 (c) (3) veterinary clinics in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Our friend Judy Sacco started a project to control the rampant breeding of the starving cat and dog populations in Boquete and Chiriqui Province, in northwestern Panama. Her clinic, Fundacion Amigos de Animales Boquete (fadab.org), was started in 2005 to provide low-cost Spay and Neuter services (sterilization) to local pets and street animals.

We are asking for donations for the following items, which will be sent periodically to Panama:

- Sterile gauze (3" x 3" and 2" x 2")
- Non-sterile gauze
- Surgical scrubs
- Elizabethan collars (the plastic cone collars) - small, medium, and large
- Any kind of surgical equipment - surgical instruments, dissolvable sutures, drapes
- A gas anesthesia machine and pulse oximeters
- Microscope
- Autoclave - table top model
- Other surplus supplies you may have

We would be happy to provide you with a small container to drop your donated supplies into, and will collect them periodically. If you have a one-time donation, please contact us and we will make arrangements to collect it.

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Judy Sacco's story

By Judy Sacco

Mocha, my cat, got very sick, so I called the local vet. She speaks no English, and at the time, I spoke little Spanish. It's a long story, but briefly, we took him to David (the big town 30 miles away) to get blood work and X-rays to find out what was wrong with him. Neither the local vet nor the vet in David had an X-ray machine, vacutainers for blood, or a blood analyzer. My vet had a friend at a local human hospital, so we snuck the cat into the X-ray suite and spread him out on the table, one of us at each end. (I have a nice picture of the bones of my arm.) We got the vacutainers at another human hospital and took the blood to the hospital lab. All this took six hours of traveling back and forth, but the David vet diagnosed him correctly. It was *Ehrlichia*, a rickettsial infection from a tick bite. I gave him antibiotics, and he recovered in two days.

I was also feeding a feral cat who kept having kittens. I was determined to get her tame enough so I could catch her and get her fixed. But by the time I accomplished that, I found there were too many problems in getting her sterilized. None of the vets use disposable sutures on the outside, and I would have to remove the stitches. Hardly an option with a wild cat. While I was trying to figure out what to do, she had another litter.

Fortunately, someone arrived from the United States with supplies donated by some vets in Florida. She brought syringes, disposable sutures, a blood analyzer, anesthesia, and a lot of other stuff. I got together a group of people, including the local vet, and proposed we use these supplies to do a spay/neuter clinic. There are so many street dogs, wild cats, and poor people who can't afford to have their animals sterilized, we all knew this was badly needed. And it would solve my cat sterilization problem as well.

We held the first clinic a year ago. It was rather chaotic, but we managed to sterilize 26 animals, including my wild mama cat and one of her kittens, which I adopted. Three vets participated, but an American vet tech administered the anesthesia. Because most of the vets here work with farm animals, they often overdose small animals with anesthesia. They don't do much surgery on dogs, and they know practically nothing about cats. I was very lucky the vet in David was able to diagnose Mocha correctly. Since that first clinic, four American vets have come here and participated in the clinics. They have also provided training in the use of spay hooks and anesthesia. One of the vets will be moving here, and wants to continue training and working with our local vet.

There is a great organization in Panama City called Spay/Panama. They have a skilled team that travels all over the country doing spay/neuter clinics. We had them here for one of our clinics, and they sterilized 165 animals in two days. Now that we have gained experience and recruited more vets, we can do 150 animals in just one day. By now we have sterilized more than 1,000 cats and dogs. When you walk around town you rarely see roaming, starving dogs anymore.

Interest in the clinics has grown in the community. Only a couple of Panamanians brought their animals to the first clinic. The rest were gringos (Americans, Europeans, Canadians). A year later, we sterilized 80 animals and only eight belonged to gringos. If a person is poor, we pay for it with donated funds and money we have raised by various events. Our local vet has learned a lot from participating in the clinics, so she is now much more competent at doing surgery on small animals.

Our organization, Amigos de Animales, is still growing and getting more ambitious. We have formed a nonprofit foundation and also are now doing animal rescue and adoption. It's all pretty amazing how my need to sterilize one prolific cat grew into what we have today.

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