

Dog Rescue Center Samui

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Dear Animal Lovers

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Thank you very much for your continuing support over the last few years. Without **YOU** there would certainly not be a veterinarian on Koh Samui or an animal sanctuary, and there would be no help for wounded stray dogs and cats. The living conditions of the animals would be unbearable and animal lovers' holidays would become a nightmare. I know what I am talking about, as I remember what Koh Samui was like ten years ago: at every corner there were masses of puppies, and heavily injured animals with maggot-covered wounds were dragging themselves through the streets. These animals were pushed away from everybody and had to die, often very painfully, at the roadside. Everywhere, you could see very many dogs that were nothing but skin and bone. Mass poisoning by the government was a common practice. But that is history. Since April 1999 (the foundation of DRCS), all stray dogs and cats have had a real chance of being helped. In the past four years, we have neutered more than 2,000 female dogs. Just do the calculation: how many dogs have not even been born and so could not reproduce. We are talking about thousands! Many cats too have been spayed and their injuries treated but the dog problem is still the priority on Koh Samui because the cats are chased away by the dogs from all the places that are suitable for begging. Of course, we have to rely on the help of animal lovers who help us catch injured animals but that has worked out very well in the past and more and more animal lovers are coming to help me to help take care of the dogs and cats.

New vet: You must have waited impatiently for the latest newsletter. Your waiting has been worthwhile as I can now tell you that we again have our own veterinarian. It took a long time to get him (like everything in Thailand), but we now have the right doctor for our stray animals – someone who will neuter five to six dogs or cats a day and treat the sick dogs.

On 2 May the first applicant arrived. He had finished his education six months previously and, in the interim, had been working in a hospital in Bangkok. Unfortunately, he was completely overwhelmed with his task here. He was at Dr Somsak's for three days for training but realized that he was not capable of working independently and he disappeared without even saying goodbye to me (that's the Thai style). On 2 June the next applicant was supposed to come but he preferred not to show up and has not contacted me since; that, again, is common practice in Thailand. We then advertised in the Thai newspaper 'Kom Tschat Lueck' and got five applicants. Incidentally, in Thailand, even advertising a job is not straightforward, as an advert has to be lodged in person with your passport and written confirmation of where you are registered, and payment must be made in cash. Mrs Tordis of Bangkok, who has helped us many times transporting dogs abroad, organized the advertising for us.

The starting salary for the vet was 30,000 Baht (700 Euro) monthly rising to 35,000 Baht (800 Euro) after three months. As is customary in Thailand, we also provide accommodation for the veterinarian at a cost of 3,000 Baht (70 Euro) plus electricity and water per month. We bought a motorcycle so he can drive to the animal sanctuary and surgery in Bahn Taling Ngam.

We were spared the interviewing procedure of the applicants (having them come to Koh Samui one after the other), because our President (Khun Theerasud) also found a veterinarian - Dr Joe who

had three years' experience in a hospital in Bangkok and neutered many dogs and cats there. We had to wait another three weeks for Dr Joe's visit but after he and his whole family (mother, father, sister, uncle, and some more relatives), had looked at the new place of work and the living accommodation, everybody was content, so he started working at the DRCS at 12 July. Dr Joe comes from Suratthani, which is a large village on the mainland across from Koh Samui. He wanted to return to his home town so he could visit his family every month. Therefore, the job on Koh Samui is perfect for him - and all of this with a great salary; a trained veterinarian receives 8,000 Baht per month working for the government and one working in a hospital in Bangkok receives about 15,000 Baht per month.

He is the best doctor who has ever worked for the DRCS. I have gained a lot of experience with veterinarians and they were not always the best. I have also learnt a lot about dog illnesses and their treatments in the past four years and I can judge quite well if a doctor knows what he is doing. Dr Joe is neutering at least five dogs or cats every day and he also is taking great care of all emergencies and sick animals.

Staff and helpers: The helpers are working hard to bring dogs for castration to the animal sanctuary. Our helpers Pong and Sakda are very curious about the operations and constantly have to be fetched out of the surgery room and reminded that they should help Olivia. Dr Joe works by himself and he only needs one helper to lay the (hopefully), correct dog on the operating table and tie him down. We will install a bell in the operating room so that the doctor can call the helpers when needed.

When the helpers are not in the surgery, they should be taking care of the sick animals or performing other tasks on the property (over 7,000 m²). There is endless work that needs to be done but the helpers like most to sit in the air-conditioned operating room – that's the Thai-style! However, Pong went too far and, possibly due to my poor Thai language, I felt it important that Pong and I talked with our President (Khun Theerasud). Pong then preferred to quit. However, I manage to speak Thai quite well and the other helpers understand me very well so I think Pong did not want to understand me. Now, we are trying to find a replacement and preferably one who lives in the south of the Island, near the shelter. The hours are 0700 to 1600 hours, six days a week - the other helpers work 0900 to 1800 hours (one hour break for lunch). If we employ someone who lives near the shelter, he can start early enough to help Olivia treat the dogs medically, feed them and clean the enclosures. Daeng, our third helper, is at our house most of the time because he is the best person to care for the sick animals. It is also advisable to keep an eye on him - he is intelligent and always has a good excuse for unfinished tasks. Besides that, I like to work with him. He has proved himself very useful taking care of animals on the beach. We treat many injured animals on site if animal-friendly tourists are willing to take care of them afterwards. That happens quite often.

Don is our 'manager' and is fantastic. He loves animals, is hard working and intelligent. Meanwhile Don is even learning eagerly the English language, and he likes his work very much. He looks after all the orders which is very difficult in Thailand as the money has to be paid in advance at the right bank, with a follow-up fax to prove that the money has been sent. Money transfers from one bank to another are only possible if there is no other way and can only be done with large sums of money. Don, however, does not like giving instructions to the other helpers, preferring instead to do a job himself. Therefore, I have to give the orders, but I cannot be at our house and at the sanctuary at the same time! Olivia does not know the Thai language and the helpers do not want to understand her. In Thailand personnel handling is not that easy. If you are too nice, they immediately take advantage of it and show up late for work, extend their breaks, and forget things that they have been doing off and on for years. If you are too strict with staff, they do not show up for work the next day or not at all anymore. I am trying to understand the Thai mentality and find a happy medium. It baffles me how one can 'forget' the daily cleaning of the wounds of the animals - that is done every day. When I had asked one helper in the late afternoon if the wounds had been taken care of, he replied with a radiant Thai smile 'LUEM'. Luem means 'I have forgotten to do it'. I love this word. Another very popular word is 'JANG'. Jang means 'I have not done it yet'. Often whole sentences are expressed in one

word in the Thai language. There is a third word that is liked by our helpers: 'TEALANG'. Tealang means 'I will do it later'.

As I said previously, Mrs Tordis has been helping us for a long time with the transport of dogs that are being sent freight. I send the dogs by airplane to Bangkok and Mrs Tordis then takes them into her home and looks after their transport formalities. Every year some 50 dogs are flown to a secure future. Most of them go to Germany, but one of them went to America. My sincere thanks to Mrs Tordis! Without her help many dogs would not had been able to leave the Island and would have an uncertain future. The transportation of a dog is, unfortunately, very expensive (25 Euro per kg) but many animal lovers fall in love with a dog on Koh Samui and do not care about the cost. You can read more about dog transports on our homepage www.samuidog.org.

Animal shelter: The animal sanctuary in Bahn Taling Ngam is almost finished by now. Originally, we had three large enclosures, one of 1,200 m² and two of 800 m² each. The house on the property is 19 x 4 m and comprises a living room, bedroom, bathroom, operating room, large open kitchen (where visitors can be greeted), and a storage room. We want to convert the storage room into a cat room so stray cats can roam freely around the house. They have to get settled down, of course, by Olivia, and they need a room with many baskets and cozy blankets when it rains. This is the reason we need a new storage room!

New cages: We have built another seven small enclosures for the dogs (between 20 and 200 m²) and 10 single cages (1 x 1.5 m). The single cages are primarily for animals after surgery but other dogs often occupy them so we will probably need more cages. In the seven small enclosures, we keep dogs that are waiting for their departure for Germany or other countries and in one enclosure many puppies are running around. There is one enclosure that is occupied by a lovely mastiff. We took him in after an injury but could not find an owner. Don (our manager) has adopted him and is taking him to his family in Bangkok. We named the dog Don, because our helper Don was not scared of him and cuddled him. Don (the dog) is nice (like Don the manager), and I am happy that he will find a real home.

Surgery and treatment: We have to have more single cages built but at the moment we first have to buy all medicine, sera, and more tools for surgery. The initial cost to equip a hospital completely is very high, but the recurring cost thereafter is less. We have installed an air conditioner in the operating room and Dr Joe has been very productive. I am sure he will remain that way, as he knows what is expected of him - he does not seem to have any problems neutering five to six animals per day. We have now printed flyers offering free spaying and neutering for all stray dogs and cats, male and female. We are also offering free vaccination against rabies as we receive the anti-serum free from the government in Bangkok. The offer is also good for animals whose owners are too poor to pay for castration at Dr Somsak's Clinic. Dr Somsak charges between 1,300 and 1,500 Baht (28 and 32 Euro) for the neutering of a female dog. Before Dr Joe arrived, Dr Somsak neutered two bitches for us and he treated all emergencies. The co-operation with Dr Somsak has always been very good and we have no intention of becoming a competitor of Dr Somsak. Our target group is still the stray dogs and cats on Koh Samui and the animals belonging to the poor people who cannot afford a vet visit. Dr Somsak will be kept busy enough with the many pure bred dogs on the Island and the dogs and cats of rich Thai people. To date, Dr Somsak has been under too great a strain and I am sure he is happy he has to work less. He is currently on holiday in Switzerland for five weeks and Dr Joe is standing in for him, treating emergencies. I am really happy that we have our veterinarian on Samui during Dr Somsak's absence. Dr Somsak did try to arrange a locum while he was on holiday but was unsuccessful - palms, sand, and beach are quite boring for Thai people. Most of them prefer the diverse entertainment possibilities in a city like Bangkok.

Because we have our own vet, the day-to-day costs of the shelter have reduced as castrations are carried out at cost. After accidents or poisonings, many dogs needed infusions at Dr Somsak's hospital for several days and that was expensive - one overnight stay at Dr Somsak's clinic, including the IV drips, cost 500 Baht (13 Euro) per puppy per day. Our costs are now very low

because the infusion liquid is very inexpensive and Dr Joe looks after the animals at the animal sanctuary. Unfortunately, many puppies died even with intensive care at Dr Somsak's clinic. In Thailand, because most people are Buddhists, no animal is put to sleep, even if it has distemper or parvo and it is obvious it will not survive the infection. Only after a severe accident or in extreme cases will Dr Somsak put an animal to sleep and relieve it from pain. I had to accept the Buddhist beliefs of Dr Somsak and I will also accept the decisions of Dr Joe, even though I think that it would be better to relieve the animals from their pains. Since most of the Thai people are Buddhists, they believe in reincarnation and have difficulties killing an animal - it could be a relative! However, it is another story if an animal bothers them - then they throw some poisoned meat in front of the dog and think they have nothing to do with the agonizing death of the dog - it was the dog's decision to eat the poisoned meat. I hope that these Buddhists will become stray, hungry dogs on Koh Samui in their next lives, and then they can decide for themselves if they want to eat the poison or not. After all, Buddhism is the best 'religion' in my view, since most of the Thai people take their religion very seriously and do not poison dogs. We have three paralyzed dogs crawling around our property after accidents or through distemper. Bakka has been with us for a long time and she even received a wheelchair from America. However, she crawls just as fast without the wheelchair over the paving stones. She is no longer chafed on the legs and she is full of beans. I do not vote to put such dogs to sleep, but in some cases a medical treatment only prolongs the inevitable death. We will see what Dr Joe thinks about this. Besides the paralyzed dogs, we also have blind ones and some 'three-legged' ones. They are all full of the joys of life and are very comfortable here with us.

Poisoning: The Thai government stopped mass poisonings of dogs and cats several years ago but that does not stop some hotel managers from poisoning 'their' beaches to keep them dog free. It is always the same hotels and bungalow resorts where the dogs die terribly. I cannot mention any names here, since the hotel managers would deny that they have ordered such actions. One manager even claimed that the tourists poisoned the dogs. It does not bother many 'animal lovers' that animals are poisoned in their bungalow resort again and again; they continue to make reservations at the same bungalow resort, even if they know that animals will continue to die at the same resorts. The only important thing to them is that they can stay at a certain beach at their favorite bungalow resort. It saddens me that they continuously support such killer hotels, since change can only be achieved by boycott. I wish these 'animal lovers' could actually witness the dying of the dogs and then hopefully they will choose a dog-friendly hotel for their holidays. Hotels with no dogs at the beach are killer hotels - that is a fact. Since the large beaches are public with unrestricted access for everybody, dogs move in as the good feeding places become available after the poisoning of other dogs. That is endless killing. But it is all in your hands to take action against that. Boycott killer hotels and tell many animal lovers which hotels are dog friendly. When you book a hotel, you can write to the management and ask how they handle the dog problem at their resort, if they feed the dogs or if they do not have any dogs. If it's the latter, you know what that means!

Guest book/home page/publicity: We have now a guest book and I would like you to write tips for other animal lovers in it. Also, when you witness a poisoning, it would be helpful to inform others about it. Animal lovers then have the possibility to book another hotel. I see the guest book as a kind of communication forum where animal lovers can contact one another. Do not forget to mention your e-mail address so that the experiences on Koh Samui can be shared among one another. I am happy about each entry! Tourism on Koh Samui almost died completely after the Bali bombings, the war in the Gulf region and then SARS. For weeks hardly any tourists came. As tourists who donate on Koh Samui generate about half of the DRCS income, we had a very hard time. We were lucky, however, during that time as there were several publications about us in large animal magazines: 'Ein Herz für Tiere' (A Heart for Animals), 'Partner Hund' (Partner Dog), and 'Geliebte Katze' (Beloved Cat), reported about us in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. In Thailand we had a whole page of advertisement in 'What's on Samui' - unfortunately without mentioning our address or telephone number (Thai-style). I do not get upset anymore about things like that because it is almost a miracle when something goes the way it is supposed to go in Thailand. There was also a report about the DRCS in the largest animal magazine in America 'Best Friends', and so we were able to fill all hungry mouths even without the help of tourists on the Island. Currently, we have some 170 dogs

and 25 cats. Every month we feed about 1500 kg dry food to the dogs. We also have many sites outside where trustworthy Thai people are feeding dogs with dry food supplied by us. Before we supply Thai people with dry food on a regular basis, we have to check that it will not be used to feed a chicken farm. As there are no chicken farms at the beaches no misuse with the dry food can occur. We also supply dry food to some hotel employees. There are many dog-friendly hotels on the Island so write to me to find out where they are. I am more than happy to tell you where happy dogs are living.

We were able to find sponsors for some dogs through the above publications. It can be difficult to take a photo of one certain dog because all other dogs want to stand at the front and so only group photos are possible. We have so many brown dogs so it can be difficult to distinguish between them. But, little by little, we are taking a photo of each dog living at our sanctuary and mounting these on our homepage. We also want to take pictures of the dogs that have found sponsor a long time ago. In 'Further Sponsored Animal Stories' you will then be able to show your sponsored animal to your friends. But first we have to take pictures of the dogs that have not found a sponsor. But gradually we will take pictures of all the dogs. Almost all of the dogs will probably spend their whole lives with us and since dogs have a quite long life expectancy with us, we will have them all on our homepage one day. About 60 dogs and ten cats are looking for sponsors! If you become a sponsor you will receive a photo of your sponsored animal and you will be informed when it is sick or if it gets adopted on the Island. Lately we were successful in adopting a few animals on Koh Samui.

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

Grant applications: We expected support from the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), but it seems to prefer spending its money on running conventions instead of really helping. We received no support in 2002 and 2003 and have submitted a further written application for support. The chances are not very great for 2004. If we do not receive any further help from WSPA, we will discontinue our membership. I do not want money to be wasted senselessly. After the last aid from WSPA, their inspectors visited us here twice and I am sure they had nice holidays here. We were assured again and again that they were very content with our work but the animals do not care about eulogies.

Donations: Unfortunately I do not have the addresses of the many supporters who donated money as a result of the magazine articles so I cannot inform them about the work of the DRCS. Their monetary support will, therefore, be a one-time-shot and the dogs and cats will continue to have to depend on your help. Since we built seven more single cages of different sizes and ten single enclosures, we naturally had many more meters of wall built so you can still donate money for the wall!

One meter of wall costs 25 Euro!

Help us with the construction of the animal sanctuary and donate for the wall!

We have built some 650 m of wall at the shelter and would like to build more enclosures, but I am not certain if the monthly donated money will be enough to cover the current cost. Therefore, we had to stop the construction work until we will have some money in the savings account again. So far we have found donors for 450 m of wall!

When you donate for the wall of the animal sanctuary, please write 'wall' as reference on your money transfer. Please check the homepage if your name is mentioned correctly in the list of the wall donors. If not, please e-mail me, and I will correct it. Unfortunately we have not gotten very far with

the inscription of the wall (your names in Latin and Thai, or whatever you like), because we have endless work that needs to be done beforehand. We had and still have a terrible tick plague and all helpers and volunteers were busy removing ticks from morning 'til night. Despite the tireless work, many dogs got tick infections and have to be treated with antibiotics for three weeks.

E-mail: Some of you wrote to me asking for the newsletter to be sent by e-mail alone as that could save us money; that is unfortunately not possible, because the envelopes are printed by volunteers and they do not understand my German remarks. In order to save cost, I write the newsletter every four months and it is not possible to take out the few letters from the pile. We have approximately 800 animal lovers on the list and more e-mail addresses. I am also sending this letter via e-mail to all of you so that you can forward it to your friends. If you have not already done so, please tell me your e-mail addresses.

Volunteers: Hanna, our volunteer from Sweden, was working for the DRCS from 0900 to 1800 hours, five days a week for six months. At the end of July, the wonderful time with her came to an end. Unfortunately the time with her passed too fast and I am missing her a lot. I cannot put it in words. She was just great! Working at the office or with the dogs and cats, she was the perfect help everywhere.

At last I want to thank all the voluntary helpers very much. Without you we could have not achieved so much, especially during the tick infestation - the volunteers were always there. We are far from being finished at the sanctuary. There are many meters of wall in need of paint and inscription. Come and help us help! I do not mention any names on purpose because so many helped us and I do not want to forget anybody. Thank you very, very much to all the helpers from all over the world who sacrificed many days of their holidays for the DRCS. The dogs in the biggest enclosure have now a wonderful covered swimming pool thanks to the tireless work of tourists (the construction took five weeks). Look at it in the homepage! There you can also see some of the helpers. In Thailand, you can do a lot with just a little money!

10 kg of dry food costs about 6 Euro!

By now we have animal lovers in 11 countries who collect donations for the DRCS and then transfer the money to the DRCS.

Whenever you are on Koh Samui, you can always look at all the invoices and entries.

Best wishes

Brigitte

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