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Snoqualmie Valley Animal Hospital Teams Up With World Vets in Loreto Mexico!

Fall City—In October this year Eric and I decided to go on a WorldVets aid mission for our vacation. World Vets is the animal equivalent to Doctors Without Borders and sends teams to countries around the world to aid in sterilization of dogs and cats. This trip to Loreto, Mexico on the Baja peninsula was the first such mission to also treat large animals in the rural ranches.

Weeks before leaving we found that our team lacked some of the essential drugs that would be necessary to anesthetize animals for our intended procedures. We reached out to our community and veterinarians in our area and in two weeks we raised \$1325.00 to purchase needed drugs. Other veterinarians also donated Good Samaritan and expired medications. World Vet teams were created, one to travel the rural areas and treat ranch animals,

and another team that stayed in Loreto and sterilized animals in the city. Eric stayed in Loreto to assist with the small animal team. In three very long days, he supported three veterinarians while they spayed and neutered 150 dogs and cats.

“We travelled across the border with some trepidation, lugging an army duffel bag full of drugs wondering what the Mexican border agents would make of our baggage, but all they confiscated at the border was our salad!”

Anyone can volunteer with World Vets, animal experience is not required. The only thing you need is a willingness to work hard and a desire to help. We can guarantee you’ll bring home more than you give out. For information on World Vets go to www.worldvets.com or call us here at Snoqualmie Valley Animal Hospital to chat!

By Dr Teri Weronko and Eric Greene



Eric Green assisting in surgery

As a surgeon finished with one animal, Eric would sedate and intubate the next patient. The team worked with animals stacked up in crates three high out on a veranda while local volunteers cradled the slowly waking animals. All services provided were free to the local population and owners were waiting for them in the dusky dawn light to be sure their pets got on the surgery slate.

Continued next page-



Dr. Teri and her new best friend

My team consisted of myself and equine vet Dr. Dana Bridges, and we were assisted by two young college girls looking for vet experience.

Loreto does have a large animal veterinarian but veterinary medicine seems to work a lot like human medicine. For the most part the vet stays in their office, dispenses medications and sells animal food. Ranchers come to his office with a list of what they think their animals problems are and the vet prescribes a medicine to take home. To our surprise, this is how much human medicine in Loreto was done as well...a person would go into the human pharmacy, list his/her symptoms and buy one dose of medicine at a time, such as one aspirin, or one day of antibiotics. If they were still sick the next day they would do it again. Though many ranchers had trailers to transport their stock, they lacked the fuel to do so.



Ranch pig awaits its turn at clinic

The roads in the hills were often 5-12 mile stretches of rocky, bone jarring, pain-staking slow terrain that meant taking all day to transport an animal even though it was not that far. Generally it is not done.

Because of that, the local ranchers were thrilled to have us come to them. Though we were officially there to work on horses, our project in fact stretched out to cover all the animals on these remote ranches. Horses and mules were tied up waiting to be seen for surgery. In the airy open walled, thatched verandahs that served as living rooms, there we set up small animal stations and spayed the dogs that guarded the sheep and goat flocks that wandered the rocky desert hills during the day. We removed a large tumor from a horse's eye and treated the goat flocks for myriad infectious herd breathing and abscess problems.

"Our job was to head off into the rocky desert hills for ranches that had never before had a veterinarian step onto them."

Though we could not help some animals, we hoped that by educating the owners about the seriousness of the conditions, we could end these animal's suffering and target the ranchers limited food resources towards their healthier animals.

In that week we worked about 3 and ½ days (actually four when you include the cow surgery we did on our 'vacation day' up to one of the old Spanish missions!). The other days were spent seeing the sights on trips arranged by World Vets for us.

We can never thank enough, all of the donors- both of money and of medications- that gave to this project. We used every bit of it, and much of what we did is thanks to all of you. Thanks also to the staff at SVAH that worked to get drugs and equipment sorted, listed and packed, and who helped spread the word and gather donations from the community. Special Thanks to Drs Hank Greenwald, Dana Bridges and Sara Owens who gave me a brush up course on equine medicine and surgery.

"This experience was a reminder of the special community that we live in, full of people willing to help another community they know nothing about and may never visit. It takes a village, and that is what we have." Dr. Teri