

# WORKING FOR ANIMALS INC LETTER FROM INDIA

MAY 2011

Dear Supporter,

Jeremy and I have just returned from a month at Kalimpong and Darjeeling Animal Shelters, and I was so inspired I want to share some of our impressions with you.

I always feel extremely happy as the taxi takes a left turn and drives along the rough road which, until recently, was a mud path weaving through the paddy fields. There is now a sign just where the road ends outside Kalimpong Animal Shelter, which says 'Devasthan' (place of angels). Although so beautiful, one cannot help but be aware of the poverty of the surrounding villages, where many houses are still built of bamboo and mud, and subsistence farming is practiced: two crops per year of rice and maize, vegetables, hens, cattle, pigs and goats are raised, the manure being recycled onto the soil. No shoots of maize were apparent yet in the fields and the surroundings looked very dry, including the grounds of the shelter, for it was not as yet time for the first rains of the monsoon.

One study of Darjeeling District in the state of West Bengal, the district in which the Kalimpong and Darjeeling shelters are

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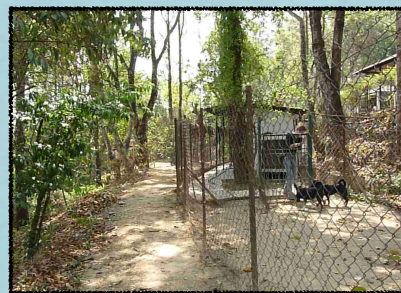
## Entering Kalimpong Shelter

At the gate of the shelter is a sign which reads 'Kalimpong Animal Shelter – a unit of, and main office of Darjeeling Goodwill Animal Shelter Trust (DGAS)'. To the left of the entrance gate is a double garage, and the road ends in a turning area. Beyond the shelter the road becomes a path, which leads to villages further along the ridge. After entering the gate, you go down a path with steps,

which leads to a second gate, inside which lots of dogs wait to greet visitors. I wish you could see the shelter – the clinic, kitchen, operating theatre, kennels, dog runs, cattery, two volunteer huts, and vet's house are all attractive, local-style, white-washed free-standing huts or buildings set in two acres of garden. I do believe the gardens help in the rapid healing of animals.



THE DISPENSARY AT KALIMPONG ANIMAL SHELTER WITH GUEST ROOM FOR VOLUNTEERS BEHIND



DOG RUNS AT KAS ALLOW LONG-TERM ANIMALS TO LIVE TOGETHER WITH NIGHT TIME PROTECTION FROM COLD PROVIDED BY BRICK SHELTERS



ENTRANCE GATE TO KALIMPONG ANIMAL SHELTER. THE POT-HOLED ROAD ALONG THE RIDGE ENDS AT THIS POINT.

located, states that :  
 As a whole, over 40% of studied families belongs to below poverty line and about one in every four families lives in such dire economic problem that they cannot even afford to meet the minimum standard for basic needs of their life. [www.irsa-world.org/XII/papers/12-3.pdf](http://www.irsa-world.org/XII/papers/12-3.pdf)

Thus many of the people and animals whom the two animal shelters service, are struggling to survive, and are deeply grateful for the help and assistance which the skilled staff and vets provide. Furthermore, one of the specifically funded projects of the trust is called 'Human Rescue Project', and is used to provide funds for families who have no home. They repay the money gradually, so that it can be used again for other local people in need. To date, five needy families have been provided with housing.

My main concern is always to see that dogs are looked after properly, that they are contented as can be expected, and given proper treatment by the vet as promptly as possible. Jeremy deals with many of the administrative matters, such as checking all the records are being kept properly, spending, budgets, legal aspects of the

## ABC DOGS ARE HEALTHY



*After vaccination and spaying they live in a symbiotic relationship with the human inhabitants of Darjeeling and Kalimpong*

\* The street dogs will always be around so long as there is garbage and so long as there are people to feed them.



trust, etc. Most members of the public to whom I have spoken when they visit the shelter, seem pleased with Dr. Deo Pandey's treatment of their pets and the village animals. Many have said to me how grateful they are that the shelter exists, because without Dr. Deo's assistance, their dog would have died.

During our stay we had many meetings with staff. On Tuesday, 22nd March, Dr. Sameer Chhetri (the new vet at Darjeeling

Shelter) and Bidya Tamang (the new DAS manager) made the three hour journey by shared taxi, along the winding ridges, through the tea-gardens and small villages of Lopchu, Peshok, and Teesta, so we could all meet together to discuss various issues which concern both shelters.

**HEALTH OF THE DOGS:** On entering both Darjeeling and Kalimpong towns the first thing one notices these days is that

## KAS AND DAS: A HEALING ENVIRONMENT



The Darjeeling Animal Shelter, is situated in the small village of Le Bong, 9 km from the centre of Darjeeling. Here there is plentiful water and a warmer climate.



This puppy, suffering from parvo, was brought to the shelter by three men. Typical of many pets, with fluid therapy and other treatment, he made a complete recovery. **RIGHT: CHU CHU, DUMPED AT GATE**



# Working For Animals Inc Newsletter



there are far fewer dogs on the streets than was previously the case, and those that one does see mostly appear healthy, although (whilst we were there) KAS staff had to catch a couple of mangy old dogs from the street and euthanase them, due to their distressed state. One day I was horrified to see someone bring in a dog which had been run over. Half of two of its legs were missing, and its remaining two paws were crushed. Its limbs were rotting with pus. The owner willingly agreed to the animal being put to sleep. There are nine pups at the shelter at the moment but the staff are hopeful that they will all find homes. The ABC (animal birth control) programmes conducted by the two shelters have resulted in far fewer pups being born in both Kalimpong and Darjeeling towns and so those that are born are now more highly valued.

## THE DARJEELING SHELTER

In the first two years of its operation, Catrina Vear, the inaugural manager from the USA, together with her husband, veterinarian Dr Yogesh

Sharma worked extremely hard. Over 2600 dogs have passed through the ABC programme in Darjeeling since its commencement in November 2008, when the spanking new shelter building was finally completed. When we purchased the land for the shelter, in Le Bong, nine kilometres from the bus-stand in Darjeeling, the architect expressed some concern that the spring water which burst from the upper slopes, could cause difficulties of construction. However, we were fortunate to have helping us one of Kalimpong's top architects, Ashok Pradhan, who arranged for the stability of the land to be tested and as well designed the layout of the shelter. We were also fortunate that one of the leading builders of Darjeeling, Dhiren Lama, undertook the construction work. Dhiren has been a supporter of Darjeeling Shelter, since we first began helping the ponies in 1993. The shelter has a main block, with manager's office, meeting room, staff and guest accommodation, kitchen and toilet. The operation theatre with garage underneath is a separate building. Three rows each of eight kennels, are situated behind the main block, together with an animal kitchen and two isolation kennels. The spring water is captured, pumped up to tanks, and then re-circulated for use. Without the water, the shelter would not be able to function. Some of the water is left to flow downhill to



## FROM THE COMMITTEE

Thanks to all our supporters who have enabled KAS and DAS to rescue and assist animals since 1993. Special thanks to Animaux Secours (Arthaz France) and to One Voice, France, who provide core funding for KAS and DAS respectively. Thanks also to the Animal Welfare Board of India for funding the ABC programmes of both shelters and to Animal Protection Network (Sweden) for sponsoring camps and the cat ABC.



## DOG RUN OVER BY CAR

Sadly this dog had to be euthanised

## PUP DUMPED AT GATE

The pup was in such bad condition it had to be humanely euthanised. If the shelters did not exist, these animals would have died slowly and in great pain.



keep the streams healthy. There is a beautiful view from the roof of the shelter. The distant mountains of Sikkim can be seen, with a dividing river valley covered in tea gardens.

**ABC AT KALIMPONG ANIMAL SHELTER**

In Kalimpong, which was the first shelter we built, on beautiful land purchased from Mr. Donald Karthak, now a trustee, the ABC programme began in a small and experimental manner in 1999. In Kalimpong as in Darjeeling, the Municipality agreed to stop poisoning all dogs when the shelter began the ABC programme. About 500 dogs per year pass through the KAS ABC programme, and altogether about 7000 dogs have been spayed, vaccinated against rabies and identified with an ear-notch. The Kalimpong shelter's ABC programme has now become largely a maintenance programme, because most dogs

in the vicinity of Kalimpong have been spayed, although there are still some very wild dogs which live in the grounds of the army, which are very difficult to catch, and which continue to breed. A visiting animal shelter worker from France, who went out with the staff catching dogs, said she was deeply impressed by the way in which the whole community co-operates with the shelter, sometimes waiting for quite a long time by the roadside for the men to come to collect the dogs. It wasn't always like that. It took a lot of bare-foot diplomacy to educate people as to the importance of spaying their dogs.

in both shelters the kennel dogs sleep on raised wooden platforms with hessian bags provided to keep them warm. I am so proud of the staff at both shelters who demonstrate so much affection and care for the animals:

Christine Townend

**SPECIAL THANKS TO:**  
- GAWLER BOOKS, S.A. The owner, Allison Sadler, sends a percentage of every book purchased at the bookshop to WFA. To date she has raised over \$10,000 for animals in India.  
- KINDNESS TRUST for donating over half the cost of a new vehicle for Darjeeling Animal Shelter.

**WEBSITES:**  
[www.workingforanimals.org.au](http://www.workingforanimals.org.au)  
[www.animalshel terkpg.wordpress.com](http://www.animalshel terkpg.wordpress.com)



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