



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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FOREWORD



"The impact we dream of drives every effort we make. If we stay true to our values and tenacious in our resolve, animals throughout the South Pacific will receive the veterinary care they need and deserve."

Karen Schade, Founder

When I founded South Pacific Animal Welfare (SPAW) back in 2010, I was very much realising a dream to bring necessary veterinary care to the animals of the South Pacific where it was either absent or where we could work with others to develop existing veterinary services. Since then, we have managed animal care programmes on Niue, Tongatapu, Vava'u, Ha'apai, Samoa, Fiji and Rarotonga. Our treatment numbers continue to grow and our amazing volunteers continue to register for trip after trip. The SPAW organisation inspires change by being present and by being active advocates for the health and wellbeing of animals. Over the past 14 years, I have witnessed a tangible behaviour shift towards the treatment and care of animals in the islands where we work and a greater level of understanding of the importance of veterinary medicine for animals.

When we began our journey, it would not be uncommon for people to avoid our clinics.

Now, well into our second decade of service and an immense amount of work later, our visiting veterinary teams are often met with a demand so large that we sometimes struggle to treat all of the animals brought to us. In 2023, we exceeded our forecasted treatment numbers by 50%.

As I reflect on our past, and look forward to what may come, I stand resolute to continue to be a voice for the health and welfare of animals and to never give up on these precious souls who rely on our help to deliver care from pain and suffering.

I would like to pay particular tribute to the efforts of the veterinarians and vet nurses who volunteer their skills and time to our programme. We all share the same dream where animals' lives are valued and where veterinary care is more readily accessible. Together, we will continue to work toward that goal no matter how challenging it sometimes seems.

THE IMPACT WE MAKE

SPAW returned to Vava'u in October 2023 for the second trip since Covid restrictions lifted. The team are supported by the Host-a-Vet team of Tracey Meikle and Bodine Morey who work year around to help us resource this annual clinic.

The Vava'u MAFFF base continues to provide an excellent space for the team to work from with more than 150 animals receiving assistance over five days. It was positive to see the number of locals reaching out for help with their pets but also to have the local farmers turn up for advice and medications for livestock, including assisting one farmer to successfully enable a stuck calf to be birthed.

During the tsunami that hit Tongatapu in 2022, our friend and colleague Angela Glover tragically lost her life while endeavouring to rescue her own animals from the shoreline. Angela was a true advocate for the welfare of animals. Since that tragedy, Angela's family have developed the Angela Glover Fund in her memory. The fund supported SPAW in October so we could run an additional field clinic addressing the geographical extremities of Tongatapu, where distances to the usual SPAW clinic location created barriers to animal access. During a five-day period, the SPAW team treated 484 animals in the remote north, south east and western areas of Tongatapu. The Angela Glover Fund will continue to support animal welfare in the Kingdom in the years ahead and we will never forget the vibrant tenacity of Angela.

Our efforts to support animal welfare projects on Fiji and Samoa need to also be acknowledged. There are many challenges facing these two large island nations and we

are pleased to have been able to work with two local agencies over multiple years, including during 2023, to strengthen their own efforts to heighten the health and wellbeing of their nation's animals.

I am proud to see how SPAW has evolved and appreciate and thank those individuals and businesses who support SPAW through their financial donations and donations of veterinary supplies.

**Dr Geoff Neal BVSc -
Chair**



"Veterinary medicine should be accessible to animals everywhere, but sadly it isn't. I am driven every day to do the best I can to see the SPAW programme thrive, and I put every effort I can into ensuring our organisation has the resources to reach as many animals as we can."

Dr Geoff Neal, Chair

WHAT WE DO



Desexing



Vaccinations



Surgery



Parasite control



Health checks



Livestock care

IMPROVING THE LIVES OF SOUTH PACIFIC ANIMALS

SPAW provides free veterinary care to animals living in South Pacific Island communities.

SPAW operates regular field clinics staffed by trained veterinary professionals on islands where there is no, or limited access to, regular veterinary care.

SPAW is often the only lifeline to medical care for those animals who are injured or sick. Our organisation is a major contributor to reducing

the stray dog and cat populations through our regular desexing clinics.

It is our hope that by being present and fostering positive animal welfare activities, that over time people will display higher levels of compassion for all animals.



2023 IN REVIEW



851

Animals desexed



1,058

GENERAL MEDICAL CASES

52



LIVESTOCK MEDICAL CASES

800



Parvovirus vaccines given

4,000



Parasite treatments given

250

EMAIL ASSISTANCE CASES FROM NEW ZEALAND



57

VETERINARY, VET NURSE AND VET NURSE STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

EXPORT ASSISTS:



1 1 1 2

DOG NZ

DOG AUS

CAT AUS

DOGS FIJI

2,750

VETERINARY HOURS

+

1,200

ADMIN VOLUNTEER HOURS

SAMOA



Victoria Chapman led SPAW's fourth field clinic to Samoa in 2023, in partnership with the Animal Protection Society. The team of six boarded a four-hour flight from Auckland and then a four-hour ferry to the outer island of Savai'i. Savai'i does not have a vet on the island and so SPAW was there to provide a very necessary service. During the week the field clinics were set up in multiple locations around the large island so there were early mornings and some long days. It was a challenging week setting up a new base each day while also encouraging locals to bring animals in for much needed care and working without air conditioning in extreme humidity and heat.

Victoria commented: "Having headed the three recent Samoa trips, it was again gratifying to help the Savai'i community in this way - the animals are desperate for help with no vet on the island."



FIJI



The SPAW organisation began our relationship with Animals Fiji back in 2013 and has previously visited Fiji on three occasions. We were scheduled to return in 2020, however the Covid-19 lockdowns prevented that from happening.

Fortunately, in June 2023 we were able to return. SPAW donated resources to Fiji to provide desexing surgeries to several hundred animals, as well as vaccines and parasite care. A SPAW team of two veterinarians and one vet nurse from New Zealand and the USA worked alongside Animals Fiji volunteers in the week long field clinic in the villages of Nadi and Sigatoka.



TONGATAPU



SPAW has worked with the Tongan government since 2010. We have a solid relationship built on mutual trust to do the best we can to help The Kingdom's animal welfare needs. There are an estimated 22,000 dogs living on Tongatapu alone. Dogs exist in a close relationship with humans as pets and guard dogs and often are free-roaming due to limited property fencing and the need to scavenge for food. In 2022, a special project was undertaken to better assess the health of the island's dog population and we are grateful to Kate Harder and the Unitec research team for sharing their findings with us. In 2023, SPAW's efforts included clinics on Tongatapu in May, August, October and December, Vava'u in October and Ha'apai in October. We continue to focus our efforts in the Kingdom of Tonga – the nation receives a large portion of our annual budget and volunteer resources as we are committed to the long-term health and wellbeing of the nation's animals.



VAVA'U



SPAW has been visiting Vava'u since 2011 and we have an excellent relationship with the Host-a-Vet Team. Aside from our annual clinic, SPAW is in weekly phone or email contact to address a variety of patient needs and in the past year we have sent additionally 200 kilos of donated pet food and parasite control to the island which the Host-a-Vet team disperses on our behalf.



HA'APAI



Ha'apai is a small island in the Tonga archipelago. It suffered major damage during the 2022 tsunami, however slowly things are starting to return to some normality. Dr Geoff Neal took the opportunity to visit Ha'apai following SPAW's Vava'u clinic last October. During this time, Geoff was able to provide veterinary care to 36 dogs, six horses, two cows and two chickens across multiple motu. Thanks to Dr Geoff for making this trip happen, with sporadic flight times and many of the smaller islands only accessible by boat, it takes some serious co-ordination to work within Ha'apai.



THE VALUE OF OUR SERVICES

The SPAW 2023 Programme was worth NZ\$1.3 million collectively to our island partners. The veterinary care provided, volunteer skills and time, logistics, co-ordination, flight and accommodation costs, donated and purchased product all adds up to a pretty remarkable contribution by our organisation.

All of this is made possible due to our large network of volunteers, donors and contributors. There is no doubt that if islands had to fund a programme as diverse as ours, the cost would be significant and their budgets would never enable them to achieve what we can as an off-shore charity.

A RARE OPPORTUNITY

"I'm so grateful I had the opportunity to volunteer with SPAW in Vava'u' last year. It was a rare opportunity to work as a vet without having to balance what an animal needs with what finances allow, and having that extra layer stripped away helped remind me why I entered the veterinary world in the first place. Here is a charity who helps any animal in need, and charges nothing for that service.

I found it a huge eye opener to realise there are still places where it's hard to find a store that sells dog food, let alone flea or worm treatments, and that so many island pets are at risk of developing anaemia from something as simple as a heavy parasite burden.

While we were in Vava'u, as well as all of the desexing surgeries and consultations, our team helped a down cow, (a dangerous situation that sometimes happens when a cow is giving birth to a calf) and we also amputated a dog's broken leg that had re-fused with the foot facing backwards after being hit by a car several months prior.

It was such an honour to help so many animals in this way as a SPAW volunteer."

Mariska van der Colff,
Veterinarian



FUNDRAISING & PARTNERSHIPS



January 2023 – December 2023 period

Revenue from fundraising, grants and other contributions was \$33,500 and we spent \$47,200 running our programme. SPAW keeps operational costs to a minimum and utilises the generosity of multiple industry sponsors and donors, which means we can punch way above our weight when it comes to the services we provide. We do not pay salaries, and this means every penny we raise goes directly to helping animals in need. In 2023 SPAW received a significant product donation from Zoetis NZ,

a relationship we are proud to have managed for 14 years. We also received a grant for new equipment from IFAW and a grant from the Angela Glover Fund. In addition, we estimate to have distributed in excess of \$100,000 in additional medicines, pet food and veterinary provisions donated to us by industry supporters here in New Zealand, to multiple island partners. SPAW would like to thank all of the wonderful people and organisations who generously supported us during 2023.



In 2010 South Pacific Animal Welfare (SPAW) was founded in New Zealand to provide free veterinary care to animals living in island communities in the South Pacific through a programme of regular field clinics. SPAW's founder Karen Schade flew to Tonga in February 2010 to sign an Memorandum of Understanding with the Tongan government and set to form a Board and register the charity.

In 2010 - 2011 we had a newly formed Board and were a registered charitable trust. We introduced our volunteer programme and the concept of running free veterinary care programmes to The Kingdom of Tonga and then Niue in 2011. At the time, neither Niue or Tonga had regular veterinary services or desexing programmes.

Between 2012-2013 in addition to Tonga and Niue, we visited Samoa, Fiji and The Cook Islands for the first time; offering a mix of services including parasite care, desexing and humane education.

Between 2014 - 2019 we continued to send teams of veterinarians and vet nurses to Niue, Samoa, Fiji, Vava'u, Tonga and Tongatapu. We also visit 'Eua, off Tongatapu's mainland. In 2018 SPAW and Unitec conducted the first scientific census to count the dog population on Tongatapu.

In 2022, after a three-year absence due to Covid-19, SPAW visited Tongatapu, Vava'u and Ha'apai for the first time since 2019. Signalling our return to field work, a small team of two - Dr Geoff Neal and Dr Rebecca Ladyman - treated more than 400 animals during this visit. The Unitec team also completed a large December clinic.

In 2023 we embarked on four week-long clinics to Tongatapu and single week-long trips to Vava'u, Ha'apai, Samoa and Fiji, treating a total of 1,958 animals.

HOPE – A JOURNEY TO WELLNESS

In September during a time that SPAW was not on island, Dr Geoff received a phone call from a concerned local about a young puppy who had been attacked by a group of dogs. The little homeless puppy had severe puncture wounds over her pelvis area and was not eating or drinking. Fortunately, Kate Harder who is a SPAW volunteer on our programme, was holidaying on Tongatapu and was able to visit the animal providing warm subcutaneous fluids and other care to the pup and SPAW quickly sorted medicines for the puppy which likely saved her life.

The wee pup, now named Hope, was adopted into a loving home. We are happy to report that Hope has had an amazing recovery from a very traumatic and life-threatening experience. She was subsequently desexed during the SPAW October clinic and returned to the SPAW December clinic for a check up on her pelvis and to show the team how well she is doing! Because of SPAW, we can rest easy knowing that Hope and thousands like her will continue to have access to regular vet check-ups, vaccinations and parasite care when our teams visit.



RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Hookworm detected in 70% of dogs tested

Hookworm is the most common zoonotic parasite occurring worldwide. Hookworm in dogs is hardly heard of in New Zealand these days thanks to the easy accessibility we have to anthelmintics. However, in countries like Tonga, where these types of products are nearly completely inaccessible, this zoonotic parasite prevails.

In December 2022 a research project was carried out by Kristina Naden and Kate Harder from Unitec. The research was aimed at evaluating the general health status of the dogs of Tongatapu. Kate and Kristina were joined in this project by vet nursing student Sarah England as their research assistant.

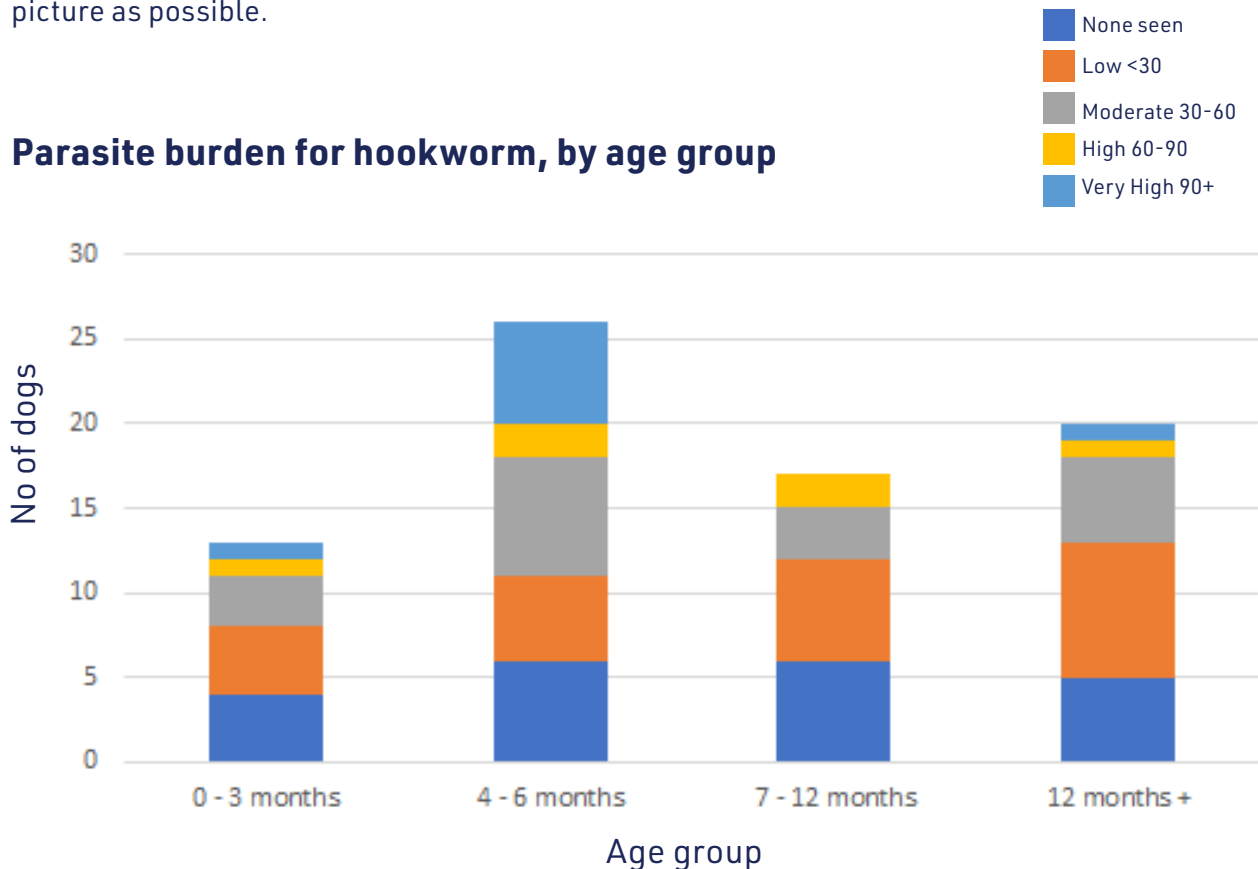
Biochemistry panels, PCVs and faecal examinations were carried out to get as wide a picture as possible.

Faecal examinations discovered an extensive parasite issue, hookworm in particular, with over 70% of dogs tested returning a positive result, as well as a similar percentage showing some level of anaemia.

It is hoped these research findings can be used to help provide some support and resources for our Pacific friends!

In July 2023, Kristina and Kate had the opportunity to present their early findings directly back to the Tongan community at the biannual Tonga Research Association conference held at Queen Salote College in Nuku'alofa.

Parasite burden for hookworm, by age group



OUR PEOPLE IN 2023

Thank you to the amazing veterinarians and vet nurses who volunteered their skills gifting 2,750 professional hours to our programme that treated 1,958 animals for free during 2023.

Mark, Ellie, Sarah, Geoff (4), Akiko (2), Victoria, Angelina, Marina, Loni, Hollie, Fiona, Sharon, Alexx, Belinda, Amanda, Christy, Georgia, Beatrice, Mariska, Natalie, Wendy, Laura, Tara, Yael, Lauren, Kathrin, Bubbles, Paula, Dani, Fiona, Eleanor, Hannah, Paula, Mihi,

Lisa, Gemma, Marie, Lauren, Kate, Jacci and the vet nurse students from Unitec.

Thank you to our local partners and volunteers who continue to inspire us with their tenacity to bring positive change to the animals in their communities.

TONGA Vea, Charles, Nesi, Pua, Kalo, Holly, Deb, James, Wayne, Sean, Lily, Dior, Amy, Suzie

SAMOA Tumema, Tiai, Vai, Mikki, Joan, Leisha, Tino

VAVA'U AND HA'APAI Dior, Lily, Bodine, Tracey

OUR BOARD



Dr Geoff Neal BVSc
Chair



Karen Schade NZCertHort
Education, Funding & Partnerships



Lilian Laurence MBA, Dip M,
Dip Bus, FIMCNZ
Strategy & Governance



Laura Harvey RVN
Vet Nurse Liaison



Glenda Gouws
Volunteer Programme Administrator



Aroha Webster BA,
PGDipJ, Marketing & Communications



Victoria Chapman BVSc,
Team Leader, Samoa

FEEL GOOD - NEW EQUIPMENT FOR TONGA

Two new sets of floor scales and an autoclave made their way to Tongatapu and Vava'u last year, thanks to a grant from the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) in Australia. Having modern equipment is an improvement to clinic functionality. One set of floor scales stayed at the SPAW base at Tokomololo and the other along with the autoclave made its way up to Vava'u.

"The new autoclave and scales made such a positive difference in helping us maximize the time we have with the SPAW team at our annual clinic. We feel very fortunate to have these valuable tools. Thank you so much to SPAW and IFAW."

Host-a-Vet Vava'u



UNITEC PARTNERSHIP

Unitec collaborates with SPAW to undertake the December veterinary clinic in Tokomololo, in Tongatapu. 12-14 veterinary nursing students volunteer working alongside SPAW volunteer veterinarians and really get to put all their knowledge to the test, and develop their practical skills in a supportive, fast-paced, unique environment. This opportunity is part of a credit-bearing course for students to use toward their Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing.

This trip has provided a catalyst for many veterinary nurses to then go on to volunteer with SPAW post-graduation, and we look forward to continuing our ongoing relationship with SPAW and the community of Tongatapu.

Laura Harvey

Associate Professor, RVN, BSc, PG Cert Vet Education, MSc Adv Prac Vet Nursing



THE YEAR AHEAD

2024 is looking to be a busy year with six field clinics planned to Tongatapu, Vava'u and Samoa, starting in May and ending in December. These trips will require recruitment of around 60 veterinary and vet nurse volunteers from around the globe and we have a target to provide free veterinary care

to more than 2,000 animals. Most trips are now fully resourced however we will put interested volunteers who miss out this year on our volunteer correspondence database for the 2025 programme.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

SPAW receives no government funding and relies on the goodwill of our supporters to resource our vital work in the South Pacific.

Because you care, we know our work is not in vain and we can continue to save lives in the years ahead.

✓ Donate direct to our Give a Little page:

'South Pacific Animal Welfare - Givealittle'

✓ Make an online donation:
www.spaw.org.nz/donate

South Pacific Animal Welfare
06-03-0195-0679497-000

✓ Leave us a **gift in your will**

✓ Host a **fundraising event** in your home or workplace

✓   Like us on social media

✓ Donate your soon to, or recently expired, **drugs and veterinary supplies**

CONTACT US

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Veterinary: Geoff, vet@spaw.org.nz

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