

# IMPACT REPORT

29 NOVEMBER  
- 5 DECEMBER 2025

In partnership with MAFF



## OUR TEAM

### VETERINARIANS

**Team Lead:** Dr Geoff Neal

Dr Samantha Lewis, Dr Kyleah Traber, Dr Nick Pallin

### VET NURSES

Kate Harder, Margie Rutherford, Hannah Gilmour, Katrina Lowe

## CLINIC OUTCOMES

Desexing – dogs	<b>88</b>	Clinic hours total	<b>33.5</b>
Desexing – cats	<b>11</b>	Vet volunteer hours	<b>137</b>
Additional surgeries	<b>2</b>	Vet nurse volunteer hours	<b>134</b>
General medical cases	<b>278</b>	Admin volunteer hours	<b>80</b>
Livestock	<b>22</b>	Volunteer flights	<b>8</b>
Parvovirus vaccines	<b>220</b>	<b>TOTAL ANIMALS TREATED</b>	<b>401</b>
Parasite treatments	<b>750</b>		



### VALUE OF SERVICES

**NZ \$160,000**

The calculation is based on SPAW costs, donated products, administrative expenses and professional services. While SPAW does not charge for services, donations are welcomed.

## LEAD VET COMMENTARY

Our final clinic of the year brought a series of unexpected challenges, yet the team's professionalism, adaptability, and strong sense of unity ensured meaningful outcomes for the community. Despite significant disruptions, the group worked seamlessly together.

The clinic week began with a major setback when Air New Zealand cancelled the flight carrying half the team mid-journey to Tonga. This forced those team members to remain in Auckland for two nights, delaying their arrival until late Monday evening. As a result, the Monday clinic had to be cancelled, and the team undertook an early Tuesday morning set up immediately before opening to the public.

A nationwide fuel shortage further affected clinic turnout. With petrol scarce, many families were unable or unwilling to travel to Tokomololo. Several community members cited

fuel limitations as the reason they could not attend or could only make a single trip rather than multiple visits with multiple animals.

Despite these obstacles, the team delivered a high-quality clinic and upheld SPAW's commitment to animal welfare and community service. The camaraderie, resilience and shared purpose demonstrated throughout the week were exceptional.

Our final clinic for 2025, the end of our 15th year of service to The Kingdom of Tonga resulted in hundreds of animals receiving veterinary care.

I was very proud of our team.

**Dr Geoff Neal BVSc**  
Lead Veterinarian



## VOLUNTEER STORY

The week was memorable for many reasons, but the strongest highlight was the team itself. From the outset, the group felt cohesive, supportive and genuinely enjoyable to work alongside. New friendships formed quickly, and the sense of connection made even the busiest days feel lighter. Geoff's leadership played a big part in this – his calm, organised approach set the tone for a smooth, well-run clinic that allowed everyone to focus on the work that mattered.

Some of the most meaningful moments were the small ones: taking a quiet minute to return a pet to its owner, sharing a smile or a brief conversation, and feeling the gratitude that flowed so naturally from the community. And of course, the team dinner on our final night added a joyful, shared memory to the week.

The heat and long days were undeniably demanding, but they were expected challenges and manageable with preparation. The environment tested endurance, yet it also reinforced the purpose and impact of the work.

The clinic itself ran exceptionally well. The facility exceeded expectations and the air conditioning was a welcome and much-appreciated surprise.

Overall, the experience was rewarding, well organised, and deeply meaningful. The SPAW organisation does extraordinary work, and I hope to return and contribute again in the future.

**Dr Nick Pallin**  
Wellington



## VOLUNTEER REFLECTION

From the moment the clinic opened each morning, there was a sense of rhythm and purpose that made the week feel both energising and deeply meaningful. Patients flowed through the space in a way that felt organised and calm, and the atmosphere was lifted by the positive attitudes of everyone involved – the SPAW team, local community members, MAFF staff, and of course, Mhirron (from Volunteer Services Abroad). The animals and their owners were patient and gracious, and the system for managing surgical cases, from premedication to anaesthesia, worked seamlessly.

Working alongside passionate volunteers was inspiring in itself, but the guidance of Dr Geoff added another layer of confidence and enjoyment. His even tempered, organised and solutions-focused approach created an environment where learning, collaboration and good humour came naturally. The entire team brought something special, making the experience not just productive but genuinely fun.

There were moments of creative problem-solving too – those "MacGyver" situations where limited resources required quick thinking and teamwork. Far from being a frustration, these challenges became part of the adventure, reinforcing the sense that everyone was contributing to something important.

At the heart of it all was the rewarding feeling of making a tangible difference for animal welfare.

The island environment brought only one real challenge: the bugs. A few suspected bed bug bites and the inevitable mosquito encounters were part of the reality of working in a tropical climate, but they didn't overshadow the overall experience.

In terms of preparation and operations, nothing stood out as needing improvement. Everything felt well-organised, expectations were clear, and the clinic ran smoothly from start to finish.

As the week came to a close, the overwhelming feeling was gratitude – gratitude for the team, for the community, and for the opportunity to contribute.

*"Well done everyone from SPAW, you are all incredible people. Thank you so much for all your hard work this year and well done to you all."*

**Dr Margie Rutherford**  
BSc, BVT



[www.spaw.org.nz](http://www.spaw.org.nz)