

IMPACT REPORT

18- 22 MAY 2026

In partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests (MAFF)



VETERINARIANS

Team Lead: Dr Geoff Neal, Dr Hannah Draaisma, Dr Geetha Swaminathan, Dr Esther Fan

VET NURSES

Kathrin Maurer, Ashleigh Kroef, Hannah Gilmour, Sam Fergusson

CLINIC OUTCOMES

Desexing – dogs	172	Clinic hours total	40.25
Desexing – cats	24	Vet volunteer hours	163
Additional surgeries	6	Vet nurse volunteer hours	163
General medical cases	295	Admin volunteer hours	80
Livestock	5	Volunteer flights	8
Parvovirus vaccines	330	TOTAL ANIMALS TREATED	496
Parasite treatments	1,121		

VALUE OF SERVICES NZ \$222,180. The calculation is based on SPAW costs, donated products, administrative expenses, and professional services. While SPAW does not charge for services, donations are welcomed.



Our heartfelt thanks goes to our Impact Partner – **Leslie Graney** – who has generously supported this clinic, and others. Leslie’s gift made a difference to nearly 500 animals lives, and helps SPAW continue our necessary work in the South Pacific.

LEAD VET COMMENTARY

The first SPAW trip of 2026 kicked off with a bang in May. The truly multinational team of vets and vet nurses assembled in Tongatapu on the Saturday ahead of clinic week and seamlessly became one united group. This group all had one goal in mind – do the best and the most we could for the people and animals of Tongatapu for the week we were there – and they sure did. A record number of animals were seen for a May clinic in 2026.

This SPAW team’s efforts were complemented by the local Tongan MAFF staff, that slotted perfectly into the group and became an integral part of the week’s success. The clinic days were busy but they always had a smile and a willingness to help.

SPAW clinics always have a predominance of elective desexing and preventative health care patients, but every trip also throws up some extra, slightly different, cases. For this trip it was all about teeth. Anyone who has ever had a sore tooth will know how uncomfortable that can be, and animals too

experience the same pain issues with dental disease. From Patricia the cat with her broken canine tooth, to Max and Jusepe the dogs with their multiple broken and rotten teeth, and Hazel the dog with her broken jaw and distracted lower canine tooth, the SPAW team set about fixing their mouths. With broken teeth removed, rotten teeth extracted and a busted jaw fixed, these animals will now have a much better life thanks to the May SPAW team. Follow up visits with these patients at the end of the week before the team departed, showed some excellent improvements in oral health, and owners who were very appreciative of the work done.

It was an absolute pleasure to be part of this team, and I hope that they take great pride in their achievements for the week. SPAW and the people and animals of Tongatapu certainly do.

Dr Geoff Neal BVSc
Lead Veterinarian



VOLUNTEER STORY

Volunteering has always been something I have wanted to do throughout my veterinary nursing career. While studying at Unitec, I was aware of the SPAW partnership trips and was very interested in participating but I was unable to apply for the student volunteer trips due to COVID-19. This trip felt like the perfect opportunity to combine my passion for animal welfare with giving back to communities in need.

I was excited to work alongside veterinary professionals from different backgrounds and learn from their experiences.

Every member of the team was incredibly welcoming and supportive from day one. Everyone shared the same goal: improving the welfare of animals in Tonga. The MAFF team in Tonga were an enormous support and played a vital role in ensuring the clinic ran smoothly, it was clear how much effort had gone into organising and supporting the programme.

The local community was extremely welcoming and appreciative of the work being done. Seeing how grateful owners were for veterinary care made the work feel even more rewarding.

I expected the week to be busy, but I don't think I fully appreciated just how many animals we would see and help. Being part of a team that completed 203 surgeries and 293 consultations in just five days was something I am very proud of.

My favourite patient was a young cat named Patricia, who arrived wearing a little cardigan and a pearl necklace, making her hard to forget.



She came in for a routine health check but during the examination, I noticed she had a fractured canine tooth. Left untreated, the tooth could have caused ongoing pain and infection. I placed Patricia on the surgery list and thankfully Dr Geoff was able to successfully removed the damaged tooth.

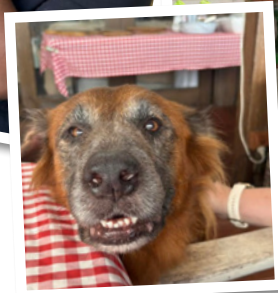
The following day, Patricia's owner brought lunch in for the team and told us Patricia was already eating much better. Knowing we had directly improved Patricia's comfort and quality of life made the case especially rewarding.

This trip was genuinely one of the most fulfilling experiences of my career and is something I would encourage any veterinary professional to consider.

It reminded me that even small actions can have a profound impact on both animals and people. I will carry that perspective with me throughout my career and daily life.

I cannot wait for future trips with SPAW!

Ashleigh Kroef
Volunteer



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