

MONTHLY REPORT -DARJEELING ANIMAL SHELTER



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RABIES RESPONSE TEAM

The workflow at Darjeeling Animal Shelter (DAS) has continued steadily with its regular activities. Recently, the Rabies Response (RR) team from Mission Rabies, in collaboration with Darjeeling Goodwill Animal Shelter (DGAS), began their pilot project of vaccinating dogs in Darjeeling, which has now extended to Kalimpong. The team is fully prepared to cover the GTA areas in the coming months.

Dr. Shivani shared that the RR team was provided with basic training, preparatory sessions, and field simulation exercises at DAS on safe dog handling and vaccine administration. Dr. Mihir, North East Project Lead from Mission Rabies, along with Dr. Shivani, guided the team with a detailed run-through of the programme.



DR.MIHIR & DR.SHIVANI CONDUCTING A SESSION WITH THE RR TEAM

RABIES RESPONSE TEAM

As part of their hands-on learning, the team conducted their first Anti-Rabies Vaccination drive in Lebong. Over three days, they successfully vaccinated 203 dogs across every corner of the village, gaining practical experience in animal handling and vaccine delivery.



In addition, a Mass Anti-Rabies Vaccination (ARV) camp was organised in August by DGAS in collaboration with the Animal Resources Development (ARD) Department and Mirik Municipality as part of the annual vaccination programme.

MIRIK VACCINATION CAMP

This was the second consecutive year of the drive in Mirik, an essential step in safeguarding both dogs and the local community. DGAS extends its appreciation to the GTA, with special thanks to the Executive Sabhasad for Animal Husbandry, Mr. Kamal Subba, for his support.



THE TEAM WITH THE MIRIK MUNICIPALITY CHAIRMAN



THE RR TEAM AND THE IBCM OFFICER & THE LOCAL CO-ORDINATOR



MR. ASHWIN EXTENDS A WARM WELCOME TO THE GTA SAVASAD



This vaccination drive successfully covered all 9 wards of Mirik Municipality, with 867 dogs vaccinated over ten days. The RR team's willingness to adapt to varied terrains and locations proved that with dedication, passion, and teamwork, impactful outcomes can be achieved



MONKEY MENACE IN DARJEELING

Dr. Shivani's recent report shed light on the growing monkey menace in Darjeeling. The town, known not only for its dogs but also for ponies and monkeys, has seen an increase in monkey populations around the Chowrasta square, Mall Road, and Mahakal Mandir: an ancient and revered temple.

While monkeys have become a familiar sight at the temple, their rising numbers have created fear among visitors and passers-by. Cases of monkey bites have also been on the rise, prompting the Municipality to convene a meeting with key stakeholders on 28th August.



PICS BY DR. SHIVANI



Dr. Shivani was requested to prepare an 'action plan' to address the issue. She emphasised adopting -the One Health Approach, which was accepted as a collective call to action by the stakeholders. Dr. Shivani also outlined both short-term and long-term measures, ranging from awareness programmes and discouraging unnecessary feeding of monkeys to establishing sterilisation centres equipped with laparoscopy facilities.



PRESENTATION BY DR. SHIVANI AT THE MUNICIPLAITY CONFERENCE HALL

Following her site assessment, Dr. Shivani noted that the growing troops of monkeys pose risks to tourists, vendors, temple priests, and especially children visiting Mahakal Mandir. The abundance of food offerings left by devotees has encouraged monkeys to remain in the area, while urbanisation and habitat loss have further contributed to their presence in town.



A SITE VISIT BY DR. SHIVANI TO THE MONKEY TROOP HOLDING CAGES AT HIMALAYAN ZOOLOGICAL PARK-SIKKIM

MISSION RABIES MEETING IN SIKKIM

An official meeting of Mission Rabies with the Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services Department, Sikkim, was held on 12th August. It was attended by Dr. Mihir, North-East Lead, Mission Rabies; Dr. Shivani, Veterinary In-Charge, Darjeeling Animal Shelter; and Dr. Thinlay Nedup Bhutia, Additional Director cum Project Coordinator, Sikkim Anti-Rabies & Animal Health (SARAH) Division and Planning Cell, Government of Sikkim.



Dr. Shivani outlined the following key points discussed during the meeting:

1. Simultaneous MD-ARV campaign in the bordering areas
2. Sharing of data on suspected & confirmed rabies cases
3. Trans-boundary movement of dogs and cross-boundary control measures
4. Strengthening community awareness campaigns
5. Identifying and targeting high-risk dog population areas
6. Lack of timely reporting and underreporting of rabies cases
7. Poor coordination between animal and human health sectors
8. Risk of rabies spread in remote and hard-to-reach areas
9. Need for stronger One Health collaborations across government departments and States.

Immediate Needs of Sikkim:

1. LFA Kits for rapid diagnosis
2. PPE Kits for field veterinarians and staff
3. Brain sample collection training for field vets
4. Data Collection App to improve surveillance and reporting

“Overall, the meeting was highly productive, with all stakeholders expressing strong commitment to collaborative action against dog-mediated rabies. Emphasis was laid on strengthening surveillance, improving cross-sector coordination, and addressing gaps in diagnostics, manpower, and public awareness to achieve sustainable rabies control in Sikkim,” said Dr. Shivani.

RESCUE

Darjeeling continues to encounter frequent road traffic accident cases, and one such case occurred this month. A dog was rescued by the Darjeeling Animal Shelter team after being struck by a moving vehicle. The incident was reported by workers of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, who promptly informed the Shelter to take necessary action.



The dog was brought to DAS, where examinations by Dr. Shivani and Dr. Regal revealed shoulder muscle atrophy and mild abrasions on the paw caused by dragging due to knuckling. The scapula spine was pronounced, and CP and DP reflexes were absent on the left forelimb. Based on these findings, the dog was tentatively diagnosed with radial nerve paralysis, and surgery was scheduled for a left forelimb amputation. The procedure was performed by Dr. Regal under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Shivani, and the dog recovered from anaesthesia without complications.



The dog remained at DAS for over a month to allow for complete recovery. Thereafter, she was released back to her original location, where she was joyfully reunited with her puppy. The railway workers, who had first reported the case, were delighted to see her fully recovered and back on her feet.

RESCUE

Another rescue this month involved a dog with an eye injury who had been left helpless for several days. Once the Darjeeling Animal Shelter team was informed, they rushed to the spot to provide veterinary aid. The dog, however, was frightened and kept running away, said Furmit. With careful handling, the team managed to secure her safely and bring her to DAS.



At the Shelter, she received immediate treatment for her injury and has since shown signs of improvement. She remains under observation, with the veterinary team closely monitoring her recovery.

RABIES AWARENESS SESSION

The awareness sessions on 'rabies prevention' are ongoing. Integrated Bite Case Management (IBCM) /Education officers from Mirik and Darjeeling have been conducting sessions in schools, tea estates, and local communities.



A new team member, Mr. Biraj from Kalimpong, has also started awareness sessions in Kalimpong.

INTERNSHIP

The internship programme for Southfield College students at Darjeeling Animal Shelter has successfully concluded. On the final day, the students shared their experiences of volunteering at DAS and spending time with the animals.



Internships provide a constructive platform for students to learn beyond the classroom, gain exposure to new environments, and carry their experiences forward to the wider world. Volunteering for animals is also a meaningful way to begin learning about the Shelter, its activities, compassion, and kindness, and helping those who cannot speak for themselves-values that our founder Dr.Christine Townsend dedicated her life to.

ANIMAL BIRTH CONTROL PROGRAMME/CAMP AT POKHREYBONG

DAS conducted a total of 84 dog and 6 cat ABC surgeries this month. An ABC camp was also organised at Pokhreybong in Darjeeling, following a series of complaints from locals about packs of dogs in the area causing nuisance.

The situation had been particularly stressful for a community feeder who cared for the dogs daily, as she was being blamed for the packs gathering there. Dr. Regal and the team stepped in to address the issue, recommending ABC as a humane solution.

ANIMAL BIRTH CONTROL PRG.

Through sterilisation and vaccination, the dogs were not only provided with better well-being but the intervention also brought relief to the feeder and the wider community at Pokhreybong.



DR. REGAL AND THE TEAM AT POKHREYBONG CAMP

ABC CAMP IN KURSEONG

The Duare Sarkar camp, a public outreach programme launched by the Government of West Bengal, is held in phases every year. This month at Kurseong, the camp began on the 19th and will continue until the 6th of next month, extending various welfare schemes to the public. For the first time, the Office of the Sub-Divisional Officer, Kurseong, also announced an Animal Birth Control (ABC) and Anti-Rabies camp across the scheduled Duare Sarkar locations, date-wise.

The ABC camp is being carried out by the ARDD (Animal Resources Dev. Dept.) Modern Veterinary Clinic, Kurseong, under Dr. Sudenla, in collaboration with Darjeeling Animal Shelter. On the designated dates, the DAS team has been travelling to Kurseong to support the programme and carry out sterilisation surgeries, helping the dogs while bringing much-needed relief to the community.



THE ARDD AND DAS TEAM IN KURSEONG

LATEST UPDATES

- A new accountant has joined DGAS.
- A new veterinarian will soon be joining DAS
- Darjeeling Animal Shelter is looking forward to carrying out repair and maintenance work after the monsoon.