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STORMS IN THE PHILIPPINES OUR RESCUE CENTRE SUFFERS DAMAGE

I arrived in the Philippines the very day after the first typhoon hit the Philippines. Our rescue centre, being just that bit north of Manila, caught the full force of the storm. Fortunately we escaped without any injuries to either our staff or the dogs; the wind did the main damage by blowing down fifteen of our very big mango trees. These crashed down onto fences which hold the dogs into their pens, causing a hundred plus dogs to be running around everywhere. Also the trees flattened dog shelters which give shelter to the dogs from the sun and the rain. Plus of course, we will now lose the revenue from being able to sell the mangos, an income we have grown to rely upon.

The land drains which we put in 2 to 3 years ago worked really well; these drains carried the water away depositing it into the river 500 feet away. I dread to think what it would have been like if we'd had to suffer the flooding. Needless to say, we still had plenty of mud - it was quite impossible to get off totally free. We now have contractors in, repairing the damage and making improvements; we learn as we go along that there is always something we could have done better.

At the time of the storm and at this present time, we have close to 400 rescued dogs in our centre and right now everything is back under control. I think, at the time, the dogs were quite happy - climbing up fallen trees and jumping over broken fences. I'm happy to say the other four typhoons that followed did not cause us any real problems, just plenty of rain.

Now for the real problem that does truly exist - the new Anti Rabies law which came into force over a year ago. As you will all be aware, this law introduced new severe penalties for dog traders - a £50 fine for each and every dog they are caught with, together with one to four years imprisonment. You would be forgiven for thinking, 'That's wonderful'. Yes, it would be wonderful if only the law was being enforced - but it is not.

Up to now dog traders are still being charged under the old Animal Welfare law and getting away with a £20/£30 fine. It is now eleven years since I started this work in the Philippines. At that time the old law had just been introduced and, as we all know, it has not deterred the dog traders. We desperately need to get this new legislation to be fully enforced. We do have the police on our side but the problem lays with the Justice Department. Believe me, I am doing everything I can think of to try and move this forward; it is not easy. Right now I have enlisted the help of an Animal Welfare organisation in New Zealand called Sirius. As far as I am aware this is the only animal welfare organisation in the world to have United Nations status. Through Sirius we are engaging with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Food & Agriculture Office (FAO). Of course, we are climbing all over the Department of Health in the Philippines as well.

The position is that the new Anti Rabies law (albeit that it has stiff penalties for trading in dogs) is actually aimed at saving humans from rabies and other diseases that are contractable through eating dogs. This does present a very serious risk to public health as hygiene in the world of dog trading simply does not exist. Hundreds if not thousands of people will get food poisoning, E.Coli and, in some cases, Rabies. Making this a public health issue is, in my view, giving us our best chance of forcing the Justice Department into action.

You will find enclosed with this newsletter, a postcard addressed to the Philippine Ambassador, H. E. Antonio M. Lagdameo. Please affix either a second or first class stamp and pop it in the post. This is open for any member of the public to do so if you require more of these cards just contact the IWCT office and more will be sent to you. It truly is vital to get as many of these cards as is possible sent to the Philippine Embassy.

Our organisation in the Philippines, Animal Kingdom Foundation (AKF) is always receiving reports of dogs being mistreated, abandoned, shot etc. We help where we can. One cry for help told us the Makati City dog pound was not giving food given to them for the dogs; staff were apparently eating it themselves. Difficult to prove but nevertheless, myself and one of my investigators paid them a visit. Of course the claim was strongly denied but at least they now know we are, shall I say, 'active'. Through this we decided to also visit the main Manila City dog pound. One can only say that these dog pounds are fulfilling a need; they are not very nice but with so many stray dogs ... many more than we could ever handle. We were told that 40% are reclaimed by their owners but sadly, the rest are put down. In the Manila pound we found two females that had just been brought in. One of them had two 7 day old puppies, the other had five puppies just a few days old. The mothers were skin and bones, the puppies a bit better. I know I'm a softy but what could I do? Should I send the mums and their babies to their death?

No! I phoned our centre and had the vet come down in our pick-up truck to take them all back to our centre. One baby was immediately put into intensive care, the others all in high dependency. Extra special food was given to the mums, who we have named Lottie and Louise. The milk started to flow and all are now fit and well. It is not as easy as it may seem making these decisions. I know I'm acting outside of our remit but time does not allow me to ask for your permission first so now I ask for your forgiveness.

We continue to make improvements wherever possible. In the pre-med care room in the vet clinic there was an old wooden sink unit and cupboards. Trouble was, when this gets damp the cockroaches move in - clearly this is not good in the hospital area. At some expense we had the old units taken out and have had them replaced with stainless steel units - no more cockroaches! I think we have now gone as far as is possible in the veterinary area; everybody says how professional everything is. I just wish you could all see the good things that we are able to do with your money to benefit the animals. Enclosed you will see a leaflet that shows some of the benefits of our work here as well as a taste of the storm damage we suffered.

Mang Jun survived the Manila storm and no doubt he was pleased to have his new 'house'. As you know, we took the pregnant female back to the centre so she could have her babies. The bad news is that she was not able to be a good mother and out of her five babies we could only save one, who's name is Angel. She's a loveable little all white cutie who is now four months old, full of life and fearless of the much bigger dogs we have running around. Angel will stay with us until we are able to find a suitable home for her; mum, as promised, went back to Mang Jun.

As you may know, one of the constant problems that has to be faced with running a small charity such as ourselves is funding. Yes we do have a small amount of money in the bank on deposit, just in case we should get hit by a major catastrophe - it would be very un-businesslike of us not to take this precaution. That is not the problem. The problem is that all lists (supporters, members, donors, etc) are self eroding. There are many reasons for this - people move house or pass away, financial situations change, other interests take over, people lose their jobs and so on.

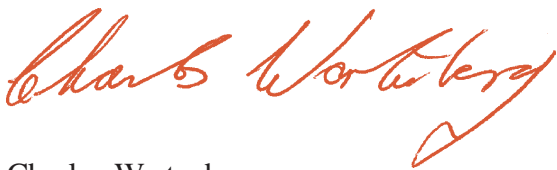
For this reason I am going to ask for your help. In our office, we have prepared some small packages in envelopes to give away. These envelopes would be supplied to you in a plastic display unit which could sit on any shop counter, library, council office, charity shop. Preferably they would be most effective in vets, pet shops and other animal related places. All we ask you to do is to ask around your local area as to who would be agreeable to having one of these small envelope sized dispensers in their premises. After which we would ask you to keep these topped up; we will always send you more leaflets as required.

Once again Christmas will soon be upon us. Carole and I hope you like the enclosed card - both of these two puppies were born in our centre and have now been successfully adopted into caring homes. Please accept the card as a sign of our sincere appreciation for your loyal support in our work.

Sadly there is no sign of Christmas spirit coming from NFA. It is now nine months since NFA have given any support to John Hughes for the 177 NFA dogs that are in the care of John's rescue centre. It seems that they have just been abandoned by Brian Davies - it truly is quite disgraceful.

Happily I know that we can rely on your loyalty and compassion to support us in the coming New Year and that you will donate now to ensure all the dogs in our care will have nice full tummies this Christmas and throughout the year ahead. Once again, on behalf of all our 16 staff in the Philippines, Carole, Sweet and myself here in the UK, we truly wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Yours truly



Charles Wartenberg

Founder, International Wildlife Coalition Trust

p.s. Baguio City, epicentre of dog eating in the Philippines, 25th November at 3pm. - Our AKF team led by Luis Buenaflor senior investigator, together with Philippine National Police successfully carried out a raid on the number one dog eating Comiles Restaurant, arresting five people including the owner. All have been charged under the new Anti Rabies law. Due to Filipino legal reasons, this is the very first raid ever to be carried out against a restaurant selling dog meat. This raid should save the lives of around 3,000-4,000 dogs in any one year. More details will be in the IWCT March newsletter.

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