

An extraordinary day in the life of an outback community vet nurse

Michelle Beveridge has been a Vet Nurse for over seven years and is currently based at West Doncaster Veterinary Centre in Melbourne. She's visited Maningrida, an Aboriginal community some 400 km east of Darwin, three times for two-week stints as a Vet Nurse working in an Indigenous 'bush clinic'.

The clinic is an *Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities* (AMRRIC) styled dog health program. Michelle takes some time to share with us an extraordinary day as an outback Vet Nurse.



6:00am Early start. Don't forget the mozzie repellent!

7:00am Make a batch of doggy treats - buttered sandwiches lathered with internal and external parasite control. We treat all the dogs in Maningrida with these to control ticks, mites and internal worms including heartworm. This has helped reduce the incidence of mange and iron deficiency considerably and helped stop the spread of zoonotic parasites.

7:30am Load our equipment on the ute which doubles as a dog ambulance. Although we're in the outback, our bush clinic has most of the equipment you'd expect in a suburban clinic.



8:00am Set up the clinic under a tin pergola in the middle of a field. Two operating tables made from doors, propped up with drums - complete with gas anaesthetic machine, heart monitors, oxygen monitor and two wet sterilisation surgical kits.

8:30am to 1pm Treat patients; mainly de-sexing and castrations. We also treat Transmitted Venereal Tumours and all dogs receive antibiotics and pain relief post-op as well as being microchipped. Really hectic as we generally have only 10 minutes between patients to prep the operating table and scrub/sterilise equipment.

Lunch - Phew, some time to rest.

1:30pm Three puppies brought in by owner. Two have been run over by a car some time ago, one with an infected jaw and other with a damaged pelvis. Not sure if they'll survive but they're bright and happy. The owner really loves them and wants to give them a go so we treated them and hope for the best. We can check on them next week as we're here for a month.

The remoteness makes it virtually impossible to treat animals in the way we can in Melbourne - there just aren't any vets in town, with the closest an hour's flight away. It's made it quite apparent to me that vet programs in Indigenous communities need to be developed in consultation with the local people in a way that is sustainable and culturally appropriate.

Find out what Michelle did for the rest of the afternoon and the best part of her experience. Go to www.bayercare.com.au

