NT Government Minister Malanndirri McCarthy recently announced funding for AMRRIC to deliver the ‘Caring for Dogs, Caring for Communities’ education strategy in the West Arnhem, Victoria Daly, Central Desert, MacDonnell and Barkly shires. The funding is for 2 years and AMRRIC has recruited Sophie to get started ASAP. AMRRIC extends our thanks to both the Minister and the Animal Welfare Branch at the Department of Local Government NT. So it is with great pleasure that we welcome Sophie Constable to the AMRRIC team! She will be taking up the position in mid April.

One of the most exciting opportunities to come along since I joined AMRRIC 2 1/2 years ago, has been the recent opportunity to assist FaHCSIA to hold a Stakeholder meeting in Alice Springs to develop an Options Paper. 42 stakeholders came together for the first time to make recommendations for the future of animal management nationally. The paper will be presented to Minister Macklin by March/April.

All disciplines were represented including the heads of Environmental Health from all states and NT, the Royal College of Physicians, Royal College of Surgeons, Dept of Heath and Education, DAFF, Dept Environment and Heritage, National Parks, Local Governments, FaHCSIA, Aboriginal Community Councils, James Cook University Research, Veterinarians, AVA etc. Dog health and animal management has been neglected in terms of resourcing and capacity building for a very long time and that was made very clear at the meeting. We are waiting with baited breath on the outcomes of the Options Paper. in particular the position of AMRRIC within those recommendations and how they roll out nationally.

– Julia
Hello there Friends, Colleagues and Members
I have recently come back from a lovely rest over Christmas all fired up for the year ahead.

The applications for the Education Program Officer position were of such high caliber and we are thrilled to have Sophie join the AMRRIC team here in Darwin.

The Manual is getting closer to becoming a reality and it is anticipated to be in our hands by the beginning of May.

Some of AMRRICs other good news will be highlighted in the pages of this newsletter.

AMRRICs membership base has grown from 35 in 2004 to 134 this year—many of them are organisation memberships.

As AMRRIC has recently been put up as the National Best practice model for Animal Management we have included it in this newsletter (p4 and 5)

It feels as though AMRRIC is perched on a strong branch ready for takeoff!! Lets hope that the Minister for FaHCSIA feels this way too! Hope you are all travelling well.

Cheers- JULIA

Meet AMRRIC’s newest Team Member... Dr Sophie Constable

Welcome to Sophie.... who has a long list of qualifications, experience, and professional and personal relationships with many Indigenous communities nationally.

Sophie has academic qualifications as a Veterinarian, in Indigenous Education, and in Public Health. She has worked in the field in pet education programs in urban, rural and remote Indigenous communities.

She worked as an independent contractor for AVA and RSPCA (NSW) running multi-school pet education programs in towns with high levels of Indigenous students, including Bourke, Brewarina, Engonnia, Griffith, Walgett, Collarenebri, Coonamble, and Dubbo. Sophie has undertaken Indigenous education program development for RSPCA (QLD), Safe Pets Out There (SPOT) NSW, and the University of Wollongong. More recently Sophie has been involved in designing, implementing and coordinating community education and training programs in rural and remote Indigenous communities around Australia including Tiwi Islands NT, Ti Tree NT, Bidyadanga WA, and Yarrabah Qld. This work has been underpinned by as much community participation as possible in terms of consultation, decision making, design of programs and resources, production of resources, and evaluation.

Sophie has also been involved in dog health and education programs including Bamaga Qld, Yuendumu NT, and Walgett NSW.

Sophie brings a huge amount of valuable knowledge (especially on matters such as getting your 4wD out of a bog!! see below) to the position and an understanding of the relationship between Indigenous people and their dogs, and the issues facing communities. Sophie's PhD, Vet Science is on "Approaches to sharing dog caring knowledge to support health and welfare in Australian Indigenous communities" through the University. Her other qualifications work towards a Masters International Public Health, Masters Educational Studies, a Grad Cert Indigenous Education and a Bachelor Veterinary Science. Phew!!!!!


Sophie has been the Junior Vice President of AMRRIC for the past few years.

Above L and bottom R Sophie working with women in Ti Tree and training men in Tiwi.
Meet AMRRIC’s newest AMBASSADOR— Murray McLaughlin

Murray McLaughlin has been based in Darwin for the past 11 years as a correspondent for the ABC’s television current affairs program, The 7.30 Report.

Murray grew up on a mixed farm in North Canterbury, on the South Island of New Zealand, and says he has always loved all dogs. Blue Heelers were the preferred breed of working dog on the family farm, and Murray himself has owned many different breeds over the years – among them, Dalmation, Dachshund and Terriers.

Murray began work at age 15 as a cadet journalist at a country branch office of The Press, the Christchurch morning newspaper. He’s been working as a journalist for more than 43 years. He first joined the ABC in Hobart in 1976 on the program, This Day Tonight. He’s since worked in every capital city except Adelaide, and for various other programs, including Nationwide, Four Corners and Lateline. In 2000 he received a Walkley Award. His work for The 7.30 Report out of Darwin has taken him to many Aboriginal communities through the Centre and across the Top End, including the northern reaches of Queensland and Western Australia.

Murray says the proliferation of camp dogs and their behaviours have always struck him as a remarkable feature of community life. His attraction for dogs has been noted by the camera crews who’ve accompanied him on his many journeys, and the crews have taken to photographing him with sundry dogs that he’s befriended. He now boasts a large gallery of snaps with dogs from far and wide.

One of his mates Jason Gates (Camera Operator – ABC NT at the ABC reckons ……

Murray McLaughlin is known… as a gutsy and honest journalist, feared only by the incompetent, the cheats and certain Centralian politicians. Educated, cultured and clipped (around the ears when he attempts to overtake road trains) Murray cuts a fine figure dressed in anything made by RM Williams. He appears to have no weakness other than tide and time. Like Arnhem land rocks that are probably younger, he weathers well.

He does have one other weakness – dogs. All of them, without fear or favour. It is not unusual to see Murray step onto a community and start scanning the area for quadrupeds (who can number in the hundreds) and it is not long before they are rewarded with a scratch behind the ear and a gentle word from the warrior of the pen.

It was with much bemusement on my first trip with Murray that I saw a mangy mutt limp up to him from under some balcony and rather than a scowl the dog was rewarded when Muz got down on his haunches and cuddled the bloody thing.

For the better part of two decades I had been visiting Communities in the top end and I had never seen anything like that. The dogs’ tail was wagging faster than the propeller on the plane that had dropped us off.

Decrepit bitches with their teats dragging through the dust, puppies with long legs and sombre attitudes and grey bearded pack leaders, all would roll over after half a minute of rubbing and patting.

AMRRIC warmly welcomes Murray as an AMBASSADOR.

JULIA

Dog behaviour study on Tiwi’s

Craig Murray, international dog behavioural specialist and trainer (www.dogschool.com.au), held a workshop in Darwin on 11th Feb. AMRRIC has facilitated and part funded their sharing of his expertise to support Environmental Health Workers in the Tiwi Islands, North of Darwin. Several of the Tiwi Islanders from last years AMRRIC training workshop attended Craig’s workshop, and then AMRRIC Program Manager Jan Allen accompanied Craig and Tracey Murray to the Tiwi’s to undertake a dog behaviour study. This will result in recommendations for “stay safe” strategies in remote communities to improve our education programs regarding dog safety and bite reduction— Jan
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Embedded AMRRIC Principles</th>
<th>Reasons Why</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical Understanding</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Importance of context to ‘understand’ historical approaches and relationships, Examine lessons learned from past. Decrease the climate of mistrust (born from white dictatorial methods in the past). Examine models that have failed.</td>
<td>Not repeat the ‘same old same old’ mistakes. ‘One size doesn’t fit all’ Move towards a model that works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td>Holistic Approach Agreements</td>
<td>Highlights that dogs are the responsibility of the owners not the Shire. Establish a local community advisory group (CAG) and animal control plan in each community to ‘drive the program’, culturally sensitive communication with significant community figures CAG needs to have regular meeting to keep dogs and dog issues bubbling along in community discussions. Work with the community, not against it to achieve outcomes, Increase compliance with animal control. Decreases the climate of mistrust (born from white dictatorial and brutal methods in the past). Identify and employ local Indigenous workers</td>
<td>Gains effective assistance and direction, community support and understanding Good coordination, a strong community committee and endorsement by powerful key persons (CAG) dictates the success of the DHP in each community. Facilitates ‘knowledge transfer’. Achieves long term attitudinal change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Employment and Training</td>
<td>Ownership Agreement Community empowerment</td>
<td>Identify and support and resource community members who are interested in dogs and/or have traditional responsibility for them. Each community requires a paid position (or part thereof) dedicated to animal management. Given the culturally complex nature of dog control it is important that a representative from the community be responsible for management of the control and education program within their own community. Through local employment and training ‘paravets undertake the dog health program between vet visits.</td>
<td>Places responsibility on the community not the vets Allows programs to become sustainable Encourages engagement and compliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Programs</td>
<td>Capacity Building Ownership Agreement Community empowerment Sustainability Enabling environment Facilitation Integrity</td>
<td>True improvements and sustainability can only be achieved through the engagement of local staff with a community based program embedded into the fabric of the community work programs. Sustainable programs ensure that short term gains are able to continue into long term outcomes,</td>
<td>Shifts the reliance on ‘white fellows’, shires and vets to the community over the long term. Reduces the overall cost of programs. Allows the development and achievement of responsible pet ownership. Reduces the burden of chronic disease for communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Expertise</td>
<td>Service provision Commerciality Cost effectiveness Accountability</td>
<td>Provide education and training to ‘paravets’ Train them to deliver Ivermectin programs and injectable sterilisation of animals. Ideally based on PRIOR and COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS, establishing trust over long periods of time. Provide feedback and statistical information to AMRRIC/Shire for national and local data collection. Assist the Shire and the community advisory group (CAG) with strategic planning Drugs Vet have responsibilities under Veterinary and Agricultural and Veterinary Chemical Acts with respect to remote prescribing. Support responsible remote prescribing of Ivomec, Covinan (reduces costs of vets on site). Support legal storage and use of Lethabarb (euthanasia solution) Veterinary Visits should include parasite control (and/or training a local to undertake this component), surgical desexing and other forms of reproductive control euthanasia where requested by the owner, pet care education.</td>
<td>Provides ‘on the job training for paravets’ whilst achieving program outcomes Empowers the local community with options for dog management</td>
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### Component: Education Programs and Knowledge Transfer

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<td>Ownership</td>
<td>Definite correlation between maximising appropriate teaching and learning experiences and achieving excellent program outcomes. Developing an understanding of the relevant legislative requirements through targeted education and training programs. To empower aboriginal communities to achieve animal health and welfare standards comparable to those acceptable in the wider Australian community. Recognise the complex nature of distributing information within the community. In traditional communities the education process must start with the elders and be directed through the right channels, especially where dog dreaming is involved. Key service providers should be identified to provide training opportunities. Support culturally appropriate training. Community education regarding breeding with friendly dogs. Dissemination of information and education about animal welfare and disease is a major component of the individual house visits undertaken by the Vet and the Local Animal Health Worker.</td>
<td>Enables Aboriginal people to appreciate what the Program is about and why the NTG and regional Shires are implementing animal management programs. Enhances the capacity of communities to benefit from the Program. Enables local residents to understand the process. Fosters effective and appropriate long term change. Non Aboriginal stakeholders will learn to work effectively in an Aboriginal context and develop useful strategies that fit the local context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community empowerment</td>
<td>Decided in consultation with CAG, include ‘white fella’ dogs in legislation Only achievable through education programs, ‘knowledge transfer’, NO 2 and No 3 Components Shires enact by-laws when dealing with dangerous breeds. Police and councils have powers to deal with dangerous breeds. (should be culturally aware)</td>
<td>Achievable through all of the above best practice components. Less animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>All stakeholders must play a role Recognition that linkages between agencies (health, environmental health, department local government, housing, etc) at commonwealth, state, territory and community government levels need to be encouraged. All play a role- not just up to shires to address the issues. Partnerships with health Boards e.g. Malabam. (Maningrida). Partnerships with Health Clinics (dog bite data and reporting etc)</td>
<td>Establishes precedent that impact of and responsibility for animals and their health lies across many areas not just the Shire. Shares the load</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicality</td>
<td>AMRRIC and Shires well placed to participate in research</td>
<td>Provides evidence to develop strategies to enhance the health of Indigenous communities. Prevents development of chronic diseases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling environment</td>
<td>Recording of biometric data is essential for planning and monitoring the success of the program.</td>
<td>More effective planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation</td>
<td>Baseline data and ongoing collation of data Tracks and informs budgets and ongoing need</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Measure growing move to ‘user pay’ and responsible pet ownership</td>
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### Component: By-Laws

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<td>Collaboration Accountability</td>
<td>All stakeholders must play a role Recognises that linkages between agencies (health, environmental health, department local government, housing, etc) at commonwealth, state, territory and community government levels need to be encouraged. All play a role- not just up to shires to address the issues. Partnerships with health Boards e.g. Malabam. (Maningrida). Partnerships with Health Clinics (dog bite data and reporting etc)</td>
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### Component: Whole of Government Approach

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<td>Academic rigor</td>
<td>AMRRIC and Shires well placed to participate in research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benchmarking Enabling environment</td>
<td>Contribute to a strategy of prevention of the infections</td>
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### Component: Supporting Research

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<td>Accountability</td>
<td>View to long term ‘user pay’ system Needs to be a staged process</td>
<td>Achieves compliance around by laws. Shifts responsibility of owning a pet entirely to the owner. Improves health and safety of community</td>
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### Component: Data

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### Component: Responsible Pet Ownership

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### Note:
Bibliography and references available upon request
Dogs in indigenous communities in northern Australia suffer from a particularly nasty and unusual form of cancer. Apart from the recently emerged Tasmanian devil facial tumor disease (DFTD), and canine venereal transmissible tumor (CTVT) is the only known naturally occurring clonally transmissible cancer. These cancers are spread by the physical transfer of tumor cells across biological barriers into unrelated animals.

CTVT is a sexually transmitted tumor of dogs that has a worldwide distribution and that probably emerged from a wolf ancestor between 8,000 and 80,000 years ago. It is unique in that CTVT cells from around the world contain 57 to 59 chromosomes, whereas the cells of the normal dog contain 76 chromosomes. CTVT is spread by transfer of cancer cells during mating, and results in aggressive tumours on the genitals of male and female dogs. Its causing pain and suffering, contamination of the home environment from blood and infected discharges, and often leads ultimately to the death of the dog.

Cambridge-based researcher Elizabeth Murchison is investigating the genetics of CTVT samples from around the world in an effort to learn more about this significant disease, its spread and possible treatment and prevention. By mapping the spread of CTVT around the world over time we may also learn more about the evolution of the Australian dingo and the development of the camp dog.

AMRRIC member veterinarians Drs Ted Donelan, Steve Cutter and Jan Allen have been providing Australian samples for Elizabeth’s work, and have put her in touch with colleagues in Indonesia, PNG and Samoa for further collaboration.

This project is an example of AMRRIC’s commitment to supporting practical research to help build the base of evidence that underpins our work.

The picture shows Elizabeth Murchison discussing early research results with AMRRIC Vice-President Dr Ted Donelan during a visit to Melbourne in January this year.

-Ted Donelan

AMRRIC Eo presents to the AVA Division in Canberra with Plans for Vet Workshop in Sept

AMRRIC’s EO, Julia Hardaker was invited to talk with the Canberra Division of the AVA in December 2009 at their Christmas event. The powerpoint presentation highlighted AMRRIC’s work, and discussed some of the challenges for vets working in remote Indigenous communities.

The division, through Alison Taylor (read her Maningrida Volunteer Story at http://www.amrric.org/node/293) are working with AMRRIC to develop and deliver a Workshop for Vets interested in working in remote communities around Sept 2010—Julia

AMRRIC’s Dr Jan Allen to give ‘Healthy Dogs Healthy Communities’ Lecture at Menzies

AMRRIC is a research partner with Menzies School of Health Research, NT. AMRRIC vets have been collecting blood samples and skin swabs for some time for work on scabies antigen and Streptococcal skin infections.

Menzies holds regular, informative Monday lunchtime seminars. Jan Allen and Dr Rama Jayaraj, Research Officer and veterinarian, will give a joint presentation on April 19th highlighting the close health association between dogs and people in Indigenous communities and AMRRIC’s important role here—Jan
There is a story behind the remarkably healthy, friendly, modest population of dogs who greeted the new AMRRIC surgical team in Yuendumu, late in 2009. Art Centre co-manager Gloria Morales’ volunteer work over the previous 7 years, and my solo vet work over the last 18 months, reversed dire ill-health and over-population in dogs, thereby aiding family health, comfort, safety, and social standards. Gloria and I (and on occasion volunteers Sandra Russell-Floyd and Sophie Constable) did some hard and original work, and attained exceptional outcomes in a very short time. I relate our experience here, as it could be valuable for future Dog Health and Population Control Programs (DHPCP), especially in larger communities.

Many of us share the view that an inces-sant ‘plague’ of (introduced, fecund) dogs, no matter how sociable, disempowers families and community, in health, confidence, pride, safety and authority. Aboriginal emotional survival and recovery appear fast receding rather than gaining. Rapid humane relief from this dog plague is surely one of the urgently-needed foundations for re-empowerment, hope, dignity, and control over their lives.

With AMRRIC, I urge government policy-makers to acknowledge this shameful Australian crisis of indigenous environmental health and human/animal welfare, with appropriate and vastly increased funding.

‘The Dog Lady’: a renowned Volunteer. Gloria volunteers nursing sick dogs, rescuing pups, treating mange, selling affordable dog biscuits, persuading funding contributions. In the 6 months before I arrived, she personally transported 133 pups to Alice Springs RSPCA (600 km. round trip).

We share AMRRIC’s view that grass-roots education, and leadership by example, can greatly enhance community dog ‘culture’. Local dog-lovers are a precious resource to support, communicate and work with.

The Yuendumu Veterinary Program, Nov. 2007 to June 2009. Yuendumu (pop. 800) is a larger community. On arrival, I found about 500 adult dogs and well over 100 juveniles and pups. Mange was endemic. Our intention was to quickly enhance dog health and limit population, thereby winning a mass ‘change of culture’. Fewer dogs becomes desirable.

Launching population control: I elected to sedate and implant females and males with ‘Suprelorin 12®’ (Peptech) for these reasons: Surgical desexing of 500, solo unassisted, would be in vain. An individual or small team can chemically sterilise near-entire population simultaneously. Mass-sterilisation immediately arrests community breeding cycle for next season. Rapid reduction of dog population (in conjunction with euthanasia). Simple, quick, sociable home procedure. Opportunity for plenty of good talk, treatments, and mutual education. Paves the way for surgical desexing of reduced, healthy dog population. Male dogs become less aggressive, safer. The whole community receives immediate reward, becomes gratified and proactive. During 18 months I visited each 3 months, working mainly alone, visiting every household (about 75) during each one-week visit.

The ‘depo-needle’ was implanted each 12 months, with interim ‘mopping up’. I found most dogs tolerated the small sedative needle (medetomidine/butorphonol then atipamezole), and remained friendly next time. (The alternative ‘Covinan®’ is labour-intensive (4-monthly), less safe, unreliable, painful, hard to catch the dog next time!)

Mange: Every accessible dog got Ivomec each visit. Mange became extremely rare, and health and weight vastly improved.

Euthanasia and talk: I talked with every family about this difficult subject. Yuendumu is near to the great Dog Dreaming journeys between Balgo and Ali Curung. It is complex thoughtful talk, about old times and new, Old Dog and New Dog, family health and safety, love and strong future. On the first visit, 141 adults and pups were voluntarily given for euthanasia. Over 18 months, 385 were deeply sedated, and respectfully removed.

Outcomes in 18 months: At my final visit, June 2009: Adult dog population halved 85 – 90% of females (currently) sterile Massive reduction in litters (from 100 to about 6 in last breeding season) Healthy strong friendly dogs, Fewer ‘cheeky’ dogs, greater community safety, Widespread family satisfaction, Many families choosing to keep few or no dogs, Better feeding and welfare practices. Families seeking attention for sick and injured dogs.

Conclusion

I suggest that long-term staged planning is desirable for bigger communities, and that annual chemical mass-sterilisation can be a first stage, and an ongoing adjunct to permanent surgical desexing. My ideal DHPCP would use team-work with both techniques, using implants to hold the front line while surgery progresses gradually. The rapid cost-benefits (see outcomes above) are excellent. Until life-long injectable sterilisation arrives (in a few years?), many remote communities will remain over-run with dogs. Available vet services are woefully inadequate. Chemical desexing could help bridge the gap until that time.

Dr. Nelson can be contacted by email h.nelson@bigpond.com
Education DVD launched in Darwin—who was there?

(L), Emma Young, Xavier Schobban, (Above, Christine Bond and Minister Kon Vatskalis, (R) Member for Palmerston Peter Chandler and his son and Julia Hardaker

(Above L) Jan Allen, Sylvia Mitchell and Helen Walls, (above) Barbara Meichelboeck and Emily Raso (Above L) Emma Young, Peter Stephenson, Cath Holmes and Donna from the Larrakia Nation.

(Above L) Dr Kirsten Ross, Rob Currie, (Above Center) guests enjoying a feast!, (above R) Alex, Bob and Simon (EHO’s), Micheal Spry, Jan Allen and Emma Young

(L) Peter Stephenson launching the DVD (R) Jan Allen, Peter, Amanda and Julia

(L) Lee Levitt-Olsen and his daughter with Lisa Hansen and Tess Cooper. (R) Julia with Anna Morgan

(Above) Amanda Donohue taking part in the official launch
Desert Dog Days - Nyirripi and Yuelamu
Central Desert Shire, NT

Jude Mulholland (AMRRIC veterinarian), Denise Pagliaro (veterinary nurse), Kim Benning (Central Desert Shire Animal Management Officer) and Jan Allen stood in the middle of the red dirt road on the way to Nyirripi and marvelled at the 360 degree vista of low slung vegetation touched with a delicious hue of green and the rain showers dropping in the distance.

Nyirripi and Yuelamu are 2 very remote communities, each of about 300 residents. They are located approximately 450 and 300 kms respectively NW of Alice Springs. Jude Mulholland has been engaged by CDS to provide veterinary services to these 2 communities. This trip in Feb, 2010 was Jude’s first desert community experience.

The 2 communities are contrasting – even the dogs. Nyirripi dogs were many, very slim but generally friendly (of course, there was 1 bitch that flew at us baring pearly incisors !!). Many older people here were reluctant to have their dogs de-sexed, particularly their hunting dogs.

The Yuelamu community was keen to have their dogs treated/desexed and keen for education in the local school (they now have the AMRRIC DVD !). The dogs are almost overweight here!

Ticks are a huge issue right now wherever there has been rain. AMRRIC is encouraging animal products-especially tick collars and flea/tick shampoos on the local store shelves. Nyirripi has had 9 dog deaths in the past 3 weeks- probably a result of tick-induced anaemia.

AND, at the end of the week, on return to Alice Springs, the team saw the Todd River flowing !!

Jan Allen

AMRRIC T-shirt design.

AMRRIC has never had an AMRRIC T-shirt (apart from the Dog People T-shirts from the 2006 conference). We are looommng overdue for one. Maybe even hats as well !! –when we find some funding ! A design idea tossed around by the team on the ground in Yuendumu is: Front- the AMRRIC logo on L upper side. Back- a ‘cheeky dog’ design (www.cheekydogs.com.au) with the Indigenous word for dog in as many languages as we can access in disarray and different fonts/sizes all around. Any other ideas/suggestions gratefully received ! Jan

IS THIS FOR YOU???

Australian volunteer program, VIDA, will be advertising from April 1st for a veterinarian position with BAWA, Bali on their website: http://www.vidavolunteers.com.au/volunteer-with-vida/current-assignments
AMRRIC staff recently had the privilege of meeting up with Penelope Bergen ABC, journalist Rural Alice Springs. Over a very noisy breakfast she recorded two interviews with us. One to promote the ‘Caring for Dogs, Communities and Country DVD, the other to promote the Manual and forthcoming NT workshops. You can find the AMRRIC interview on the 22.2.10 [http://www.abc.net.au/rural/nt/today.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/rural/nt/today.htm).

Penelope is one of AMRRIC’s latest members!!!

Penelope Bergen began her professional life as a 14-year-old violinist in rural NSW. She went on to play with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra several years later. Hobart was as far south as she could go before she hit Macquarie Island so when Penelope needed to broaden her horizons she went to an equally rainy place and continued her musical career in the Netherlands at the end of 1996. Life had other plans for her and she ended up being offered a job as a human rights activist with Amnesty International in Amsterdam.

A few years later, armed with a desire to be more active in the field, she met a producer in the English department of Radio Netherlands World Service (RNW) and Penelope told her she had a great idea for a radio show. It was a baptism by fire, making a half-hour documentary about a land rights dispute in British Columbia, Canada. She worked with RNW as a news translator, press reviewer and freelance program maker, combining her human rights work with radio. She continued to play and teach violin.

Despite sojourns living and working in East Timor and California, the northern European climate seeped into her bones and she was desperate to be warm. Penelope decided to move back to Australia partly because she couldn’t remember what it was like and what better place to come back to than Central Australia, where the vastness and beauty of the land is only surpassed by its number of sunny days.

In the first half of 2007 she spent several months working with community radio in the remote aboriginal community of Yuendumu. It was during this time that Penelope spent a week working in Kintore, one of the most remote communities in Australia. On her first day there, she was befriended by a cute, happy, friendly camp dog puppy. Despite not liking dogs, Penelope picked up the awkward bundle of skin and bone, which promptly fell asleep in her arm. The same dog came to find her every day for five days. On her last day in the community, Penelope felt a duty of care to the starving, but happy dog and went to the school to see if anybody owned her. On asking the school children, they all replied in unison “You do!” To double check, she went to the art centre. “No, that’s Corny,” said an employee, mispronouncing the word ‘Kuunyi’ which means ‘poor thing’ in Pintubi. “She’s banned from the centre for stealing the old people’s lunches.” A few more drives around the community and Corny showed up, wasognapped, slept all the eight hour drive to Yuendumu, and so began an interest in and a love of camp dogs and their culture. Several months later, on moving to Alice Springs, Penelope made her first series for ABC radio’s Regional Production Fund “Camp Dog Tails” which went to air in early 2008. It can still be found on the ABC’s website or at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inKgmiPEaw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inKgmiPEaw).

Penelope’s first novel, a fictional account of her childhood, a shape-shifting snake and a young woman’s dreams in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, was published in the Netherlands by Archipel Publishing in 2006. A second novel is in her head, ready to go when she ever gets the time to write it. Penelope also teaches violin, and continues to work in radio and other forms of media. She continues to be the very proud caretaker of a part-dingo camp dog called Corny, who is the light of her life.

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**ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AS VETERINARY NURSES**

When I started doing dog health programmes, I had my partner as a vet nurse. It was a brand new experience for me, so it was important to have consistency. After a couple of years, I was asked by Carol Harris in Borroloola if I would use the girls who were in her Life Skills programme, as the vet nurses. My concern was if a dog died, that they would be associated with the vet who was responsible, but I was told that it was still worth it, and that they were aware of the risks.

There are three or four girls. Having three or four is good because there is less pressure on the individual to perform, and it’s more relaxed. If someone gets tired, the nurses swap so they can have a break. In this case, each visit there is someone new, or an old face reappears, and Cyantha, who has been there from the beginning, helps me to train newcomers. I am impressed with how quickly and how well every girl not only learns the job, but remembers it, from visit to visit. We have quite a nice routine happening. When I was in another community and my nurse got sick, Cheryl from Borroloola happened to be there, and she agreed to fill in. Although it had been a year since working together, she did the job like it was the day before.

The girls are able to guide me with respect to cultural etiquette, such as "Sorry camps, and lately we are discussing which bush medicines may work on dogs. I also get to quiz the girls about the magic of the Aboriginal culture, and the land we live in. I find it fascinating.

It has been a very positive experience and I recommend it.

- Jo Mansson

*Corney and Cyantha*
Owen Lavers……… a Yarrabah Yarn

My direct involvement with Yarrabah, just out of Cairns, dates back to the three day workshop for vets held there by AMRRIC in June 2008. It was a terrific workshop and it came at a time when I was thinking that sometime soon I may be able to spare some time to get over there to supply some veterinary service.

It took a long time to happen, but after much email and phone traffic between Yarrabah Council and EHO’s, Jan and Julia at AMRRIC, Qld Department of Health and other interested parties, my senior vet nurse and I made our first visit in November 2009.

The preliminary aim of the officers at Yarrabah is to help members of the community get wanted dogs desexed. So there is money available for the Shire Council to employ me for one day per month to do about ten spays.

It is hoped that as the number of desexed dogs increases, the benefits will become more and more obvious, and more members of the community will become keen on the idea, and demand may lead to owners being prepared to at least contribute to the costs themselves.

It is early days, but my visits have been well received and so far have gone very smoothly with all owners very happy with the results; and thankfully, no mishaps (touch wood). My nurse and I enjoy the day, and our makeshift surgery has a wonderful view right out to the Coral Sea—Owen

Don’t worry buddy, my mate recovered from surgery like this last month!

I wonder if my clients would come over to this surgery!!

Families as First Teachers’ Mini Expo, Department of Education, March 2010

Families as First Teachers is an early childhood and parenting support program for remote Indigenous communities. AMRRIC was invited to have a stall at a mini-expo which was part of a 3 day workshop. The purpose of the ‘mini-expo’ on Wednesday the 10th of March was an opportunity to share programs and resources and network with other service providers. There was a crowd of exhibitors and participants with of course, a great interest in dogs.

Once again, dog bites and attacks are making headlines up here in the NT. AMRRIC has responded through numerous ABC Radio and National Indigenous Radio interviews. Among the uninformed comments was the Opposition Leader Terry Mills, publically supporting the call for a cull. Culling, as a single approach has NEVER proved to be a sustainable or respectful option.

Many thanks to our new Ambassador, Murray McLaughlin who ensured that AMRRIC could speak on Stateline about the immensity of the task at hand and sustainable solutions rather than knee jerk reactions. The Stateline interview can be seen here.

Some of the recent stories/interviews can be seen/heard through these sites.

http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/08/2839576.htm?
site=news
http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2009/s2744357.htm

More hype and knee jerk reactions!!
In January 2009, Nicole went on holidays to the Torres Strait; a move that would change the course of her career. She saw the need to improve the environmental health standards within the Torres Strait and wanted to ‘make a difference’ rather than continue the assessment of development applications, licence applications, inspections and late night noise testing of businesses she was currently doing. Within one month she had applied for and accepted the recently created position of Manager Environment and Health of the then newly amalgamated Torres Strait Island Regional Council. As a part of this position, Nicole manages many areas including animal management, environmental health, waste management and the environment for the 15 communities which comprise the TSIRC Council. She thoroughly enjoys her work and loves working with her employees and the Torres Strait Island community. In the nine months she has spent with TSIRC she has achieved many of her goals, but is particularly proud of a one week training workshop she prepared and held in Cairns for 35 of her employees (including Animal Management Workers) in August 2009. She has also actively recruited additional Animal Management Workers to increase her Animal Management team from three employees to thirteen and has organised training opportunities for all animal management staff members. While Nicole is new to the animal management field, she is keen to improve her knowledge in this field and in 2010, aims to run responsible pet ownership programs, finalise the implementation of an animal registration program, improve the communication network between animal management workers within her Council area and ensure all Animal Management Workers are provided with the equipment needed to successfully do their jobs. She looks forward to forging a good working relationship with AMRRIC and improving the standards of environmental health for all Torres Strait Islanders.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- **AMRRIC AGM and dinner**  
  September 2010, Sydney

- **AMRRIC Exposé at University of Sydney Veterinary School**  
  September 2010

**CONFERENCE**

**4th International Symposium on Non-Surgical Contraceptive Methods of Pet Population Control**

The Symposium will be held on April 8-10, 2010, in Dallas, Texas, U.S.A. Presented by the Alliance for Contraception in Cats & Dogs (ACC&D) in partnership with the Found Animals Foundation. Information on the program, speakers and registration is available at:  
http://www.acc-d.org/

**Australian Institute of Animal Management (AIAM)**

6-8 October 2010, AIAM Annual Conference on urban animal management
Stamford Grand  Glenelg, South Australia

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Above Nicole in situ (Nicole is the blonde) with the Animal Management Officers

Member of the Month for Feb- Nicole Howcroft
Memberships

Is your membership up to date? AMRRIC annual membership follows the financial year calendar. This year’s membership is from 1 July 30 June. If you haven’t yet renewed your membership, or if you’d like to become a new AMRRIC member, please complete an online membership form and post it along with the fee to PO Box 1296, Darwin, NT, 0801. Once your membership details are confirmed you will have full access to the website www.amrric.org and to “Conducting Dog Health Programs in Indigenous Communities - A Veterinary Guide” written by Dr Sam Phelan and funded by IFAW. To download a membership form, go to: http://www.amrric.net/2007/11/15/become-a-member

AMRRIC now has a sponsors/funders page on our website – check outs who’s supporting us!! Many thanks to all of them

Donations

AMRRIC has full Deductible Gift Recipient status from the ATO which means all donations are Tax Deductible. Every contribution is valuable and helps make sustainable dog management a reality in communities across Australia.

AMRRIC welcomes CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP

NEWSLETTER TEAM

Sophie Constable, Julia Hardaker, Jan Allen.

Email your articles to info@amrric.org

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Topics covered;
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• Desexing your dogs
• Caring for Country
• Preventing Skin Sores
• Safety around Dogs