

ANIMALS ASIA FOUNDATION  
Qi Ming Dog Rescue Report  
December/January 2008/09



**AnimalsAsia**  
Foundation

## Background

On 31st December 2008, the Qi Ming Dog Rescue Centre received 149 dogs after they were confiscated from an illegal dog meat trader. The Animals Asia Foundation responded to a request from the Qi Ming Rescue Centre to help provide emergency veterinary care to these animals.

Between the 31st December 2008, and 29th January 2009 staff from the Animals Asia Foundation visited Qi Ming Rescue Centre 9 times, providing emergency veterinary assistance.

## Dates

Date of rescue	31/12/2008
AAF visits to Qi Ming	31/12/08
	01/01/09
	02/01/09
	06/01/09
	09/01/09
	13/01/09
	15/01/09
	20/01/09
	29/01/09
Total number of Animals Asia Foundation staff visits = 9	

## Construction and Management Assistance

During the course of the initial visits, male and female dogs were divided into separate groups in order to reduce aggression and prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Roofs were extended above many of the current enclosures and weather proofing ensured that the dogs were protected from the elements. Dirt floors were cemented over to enable more hygienic cleaning to reduce the spread of disease between animals. A total of RMB39,000 was spent on the above.

In addition, a total of HK\$14,000 was spent on drugs and veterinary supplies during the month of January. This included injectable anaesthetic, injectable and tablet sedatives, injectable and tablet anti-inflammatory drugs, injectable and tablet de wormers, injectable and tablet antibiotics, vaccinations (including DHPPI – purchased by AAF, and rabies – all donated), eye drops, swabs, gloves, face masks, , blood tubes, syringes, needles, scalpel blades, disinfectant and hand wash, towels, paper towels, protective jackets and trousers, boots and refuse sacks.

A further RMB3,520 was spent on tissue analysis for detection of rabies and distemper virus.

Finally, RMB14,700 was spent on 60 wooden dog beds, vehicle rental RMB1,272, dog treat sausages RMB373, cleaning and protection material RMB190, protective clothing (jacket, trousers and boots) RMB1242, plus meals for staff RMB1531.

Total = RMB61,828, plus HK\$14,000

## **Biosecurity protocol**

On arrival in Qi Ming Rescue Centre, many of the rescued dogs were showing signs of infectious disease (very depressed, discharge from the eyes and nose, coughing, diarrhoea and severe weight loss). Many infectious diseases are transmitted through saliva, blood, urine or faeces.

Given that there are a large number of serious infectious diseases of dogs in China, many of them with the potential to infect people (including Rabies), a strict Biosecurity Protocol was implemented. The aim of this protocol was to reduce the risk of spread of disease from the dogs to the staff dealing with them, to other resident dogs in Qi Ming Rescue Centre, to pets of staff attending to the dogs, and to the Asiatic Black Bears at the Animals Asia Foundation China Bear Rescue Centre.

The following protocol applied to both AAF and Qi Ming staff dealing with the rescued dogs.

Protection of staff against Rabies virus:

- It was ensured that all AAF and Qi Ming staff attending to these dogs were vaccinated with prophylactic Rabies Virus vaccination course, using imported French vaccine (Verorab™).
- All staff were reminded regularly that their health was the number one priority, and that no one should touch any dog which threatened to bite.
- Staff wore latex gloves at all times, and thick protective gloves when handling dogs.
- Any staff member who had been exposed to rabies (bitten, licked over a break in their skin, or bodily fluids into the eyes/mouth) received Rabies post exposure vaccination course.

Biosecurity Protocol for reduction of risk of spread of disease:

- Prior to entering the Qi Ming rescued dog area, all AAF and Qi Ming Staff were required to change into a pair of wellington boots, and a set of waterproof trousers/coat.
- Prior to leaving the Qi Ming rescued dog area, all staff were required to
  1. Wash their hands (including scrubbing under nails) using Chlorhexidine Anti-bacterial skin wash, water and a scrubbing brush.
  2. Change out of the waterproof clothing and wellington boots.
- All staff to shower and wash their hair, and to wash the clothes worn under the waterproof clothes as soon as possible once returning home from Qi Ming Rescue Centre.
- All veterinary equipment, food and water bowls, leads and blankets used were designated for these dogs only (ie, they were not to be used in the other areas of the Qi Ming Rescue Centre, and were not used for bears or other small animals in AAF's rescue centre. After 29th January, all non-disposable items owned by AAF were cleaned thoroughly, and then disinfected using Virkon disinfectant.

## **Health examinations**

Health examinations were performed for as many dogs as possible. Each dog examined was given an individual identification number, and this number was written on a collar to allow for future identification of previously checked animals. The sex and approximate age of each animal was noted. An assessment of overall health status, approximate weight, body condition, demeanor and temperament were conducted by trained veterinary professionals. Any external wounds or signs of disease were documented.

Over the course of 9 visits a total of 157 health examinations were performed. Some animals received more than one health examination. Second or subsequent examinations enabled AAF staff to assess an animal's response to treatment or perform booster vaccination.

Since the safety of staff was one of our main concerns, the temperament of many of the rescued dogs precluded them from being examined. Dogs which were aggressive towards people could not be handled.

While over time many dogs became more trusting of humans, there are still 28 animals in Qi Ming rescue centre which have not had health checks, and therefore do not have individual ID numbers and have not been vaccinated or de-wormed.

### **Veterinary treatment provided**

Many dogs in the centre were showing clinical signs of infectious disease (coughing, nasal discharge, ocular discharge, respiratory difficulties, diarrhoea and vomiting), or traumatic wounds. Some of these wounds may have been the result of fights between dogs. However, a large percentage of wounds seen were most likely a result of the conditions of transport in the dog trade.

Wounds and signs of disease were treated with appropriate oral antibiotics and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Over the course of the visits, a total of 33 dogs were treated with oral antibiotics and/or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

All dogs examined were also given anti-parasitic medication (Ivermectin) to treat both internal and external parasites.

### **Prophylactic vaccinations provided**

Spread of infectious disease amongst the dogs was one of our major concerns. Fatal diseases such as Canine Distemper Virus, Canine Parvovirus and Rabies are commonly found in China. The stressful, unhygienic and overcrowded conditions of transport in the dog trade provide the ideal setting for the spread of these infectious diseases. In general, these dogs arrived in the Qi Ming Rescue centre in very poor condition and were likely to be highly susceptible to infectious disease.

Prophylactic vaccinations against Distemper virus, Canine Hepatitis, Canine Parvovirus, Canine Parainfluenza Virus (DHPPi Vaccination) and Rabies were given to as many dogs as possible. Vaccinations were given at the time of health examination.

- A total of 77 dogs received at least one DHPPi vaccination, of these 19 animals subsequently also received booster vaccination. The reason for the much smaller number of booster vaccinations given was that we initially focused on providing at least an initial health examination and first vaccination to as many dogs as possible before starting on booster vaccinations.
- A total of 31 dogs received vaccination against Rabies virus. The reason for the lower number of rabies vaccination provided was that these vaccinations were not available until the final visit to Qi Ming Rescue centre.

### **Euthanasia**

Following health examination by a trained veterinary professional, the difficult decision was made in some cases to humanely euthanase an animal.

The reasons for euthanasia varied. Many animals were euthanased on humane grounds, when clinical signs of disease or traumatic wounds were so severe as to be life threatening. By euthanasing these animals, not only were we able to end the individual animal's suffering, but we were also able to help limit the spread of infectious disease to the other dogs in the rescue centre.

A number of animals were euthanased due to extreme aggression towards other dogs. Euthanasia of these animals resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of life, and reduction in the risk of spread of infectious disease, to the remaining animals in the rescue centre.

A smaller number of animals were euthanased due to extreme aggression towards humans. This decision was made after consideration of the safety of the staff employed to take care of these animals, as well as an assessment of the very poor likelihood of rehoming these animals in the future.

Over the course of 10 visits, a total of 88 dogs were humanely euthanased, using an intravenous injection of Sodium Pentobarbitone, following either oral or intramuscular sedation. The decision to euthanase animals was not taken lightly, and was a very difficult process for all staff involved.

Tissue sample collection and diagnostic tests.

Given the high suspicion of infectious diseases, including the serious zoonotic disease Rabies, a decision was made to collect samples from all euthanased dogs to enable testing for selected viruses.

Brain tissue was collected from each animal immediately following euthanasia. Throughout the day, collected samples were stored on ice. Samples were transferred to the -200 C freezer as soon as possible after arriving back in the AAF Rescue Centre. Samples were tested as soon as possible after collection.

Frozen brain tissue samples from these dogs were tested for both Rabies and Distemper virus.

- Rabies Virus testing was carried out by the Sichuan CDC, Contact: Miss Qiao Tel: 028-85587627.  
Rabies testing was by Fluorescent Antibody Testing (FAT), which is the OIE recommended test for rabies.  
Frozen brain tissue from 70 dogs was tested for the presence of Rabies virus. All samples tested were negative for this virus.
- Canine Distemper Virus testing was carried out by Distemper Test  
Southwest Nationality University, Contact: Dr Tang Tel: 028-85528276/13981882615  
Presence of Distemper Virus was tested using rtPCR, which is the OIE recommended test for Canine Distemper Virus.  
Frozen brain tissue from 15 suspect dogs (mucopurulent ocular and nasal discharge, +/- diarrhoea) was tested for the presence of Canine Distemper Virus. Of these, 12 samples returned positive results for this virus.

### **Ongoing Responsibility of Animals Asia Personnel**

There are now 47 dogs remaining in the Qi Ming Rescue Centre (all others have died secondary to disease, or have been humanely euthanased). Of these 27 are female, 20 are male.

From 29th January, Animals Asia personnel will continue to visit Qimeng Rescue Centre in order to provide ongoing help for the previous “earthquake dogs” under our care. We shall also be checking the rescued market dogs and advising Qimeng personnel of any problems arising, and recommending appropriate treatment and drugs for their own Veterinary Surgeon to follow. We have left drugs and instructions for staff to treat dogs which we believe can be helped for now, but again have requested that Qimeng’s own vet now carry out subsequent visits and treatment of any sick dogs. We have agreed to euthanize any dogs that are sick during the course of our visits in the future. We have also confirmed that all Qimeng personnel currently working “hands on” have been vaccinated against rabies – as have our own Animals Asia staff.

We have trained the Qimeng personnel in basic cleaning protocols of the enclosures and have requested that they provide plenty of cardboard in the beds and cages as a more comfortable base for the dogs to rest.

We have requested Qimeng personnel not to introduce any more dogs into the current facility owing to increased welfare and disease implications if additional animals are added to what is already an overcrowded facility.

We have asked that the current enclosures be kept secure and to avoid any dogs being transferred into other enclosures. We have trained the Qimeng personnel on bio security protocols and instructed them to change into protective clothing each time they enter the areas where the market dogs are housed. They are instructed to wash hands and change clothes again before entering the earthquake (Dujiangyang) dog areas.

We have instructed Qimeng management and staff to incinerate any dogs that die on site in order to prevent further spread of disease. We have given them the incinerator with explicit instructions on how to use.

We have invited their Veterinary surgeon to observe our work at the Qimeng site and have also invited him to come to our Hospital at the China Bear Rescue Centre in order to observe basic dog and cat care as we treat our animal therapy dogs (Dr Dog) usually once per week.

Our Education Department will be working with Qimeng managers in the future to organise a local homing drive with media coverage, in order to find adoptive homes for as many of the dogs as possible.