

S.O.S. Sardinian Cat Neutering Appeal.

A report by Animal Samaritan's volunteer Silvana Valentino Locke.

As you can see from the photos, this is what spurred me into trying to help the cats in my home country, Italy. The place is Sardinia and a town called Alghero which I visit on a regular basis.

By the port, amongst the rocks, there is a colony of cats left to roam the streets, starving and often suffering from a multitude of feline infectious diseases, most commonly FIV.

Each time I visit there are more and more poorly and desperately ill cats, some that cannot be saved. Most of the kittens are born with eye infections that blind them. In the winter the waves are so high that it sweeps many of the kittens into the water and they drown. Youths in the area use the cats for their cruel games and throw bottles at them to see who can hit the most. Many are injured by rocks and glass - some kittens are killed.

I always end up in tears. I had to do something to help these cats. I know it is a drop in the ocean as there are so many parts of the world that are in the same situation. However, I had the opportunity of doing something for these cats. Sonia McBride my veterinary surgeon and Gemma Home, her assistant, offered their help. I tried in vain with the authorities in Alghero to allow Sonia to come and work for free and neuter as many cats as possible.

This was going to take a while as things in this small village take forever. I contacted some of the local vets. They wanted to charge the earth to neuter the cats, most of them asked double what we pay here for neutering. Then I found a vet who had the same compassion for the suffering animals as I did. She offered me a better rate (still higher than here.)



Lunchtime - We managed to neuter & castrate all of these cats.



The two Vets at work.

This meant me setting some goals to raise money to be able to go and help in this area. I was very fortunate that I did get some people to donate money for this cause and one very special person donated a large sum which was going to enable me to help many of the cats. Gemma (the vet nurse) and I set off with as much equipment and medication we could and got to work on the very first day we got there. We managed to catch 8 cats the first day, 9 the second, 4 the third, rescued two kittens from drowning and then one more injured cat another day. We would have done more but Gemma had to get back to work in England.

The local vet and her husband worked around the clock for us as it was not certain how long it would be for us to catch any cats. We managed to neuter and castrate - then had to keep all 22 cats and two kittens at home with antibiotics, worming tablets and vitamins before being able to free them back into their environment.

It was absolutely shattering but so worthwhile. We got away with only a few scratches. Gemma was an absolute whiz kid at getting them and I was her assistant.

What a team! It was the most fantastic feeling freeing them back into their natural environment looking so much healthier and knowing that it would help reduce the amount of pregnancies. It meant that no longer would kittens have to fight for survival. Many do not survive and die in terrible pain. Most have chest infections and skin conditions.

On my last day I visited the cats with my usual 20 tins of cat food and they were all basking in the sun. Happy and contented.

Our next trip will be in February 2004 when Sonia, Gemma, myself and Valerie Wagland (another Animal Samaritan volunteer) will once again collect and help another batch of cats/kittens. Special thanks must go to all the people in the U.K. who generously donated to this cause and to Valerie Wagland who made it possible for the latest trip to the Island.



Releasing the cats - What a great feeling!

If you can help in any way, please contact me, Silvana on 01959 572319 or 07958 273118.