

AVMA Situation Report 4 – South Asia Tsunami

Date: 2/28/05

AVMA, Heifer International team up to bring tsunami aid

The AVMA and Heifer International are collaborating to raise \$1 million for long-term development in tsunami-ravaged countries of South and Southeast Asia.

The AVMA will solicit donations to Heifer International from Association members, industry partners, and the public, and provide matching funds up to a maximum of \$500,000. As an initial challenge match, the AVMA has already contributed \$100,000 toward its half-million-dollar commitment. For more information visit:

http://www.avma.org/aa/tsunami_recovery/default.asp

Serving Member Updates

Bruce T. Boehringer, DVM

2/26/2005

As you know, I am on the US Navy hospital ship Mercy off Banda Aceh, Indonesia doing medical relief for the survivors of the tsunami, which is the biggest natural disaster of our lifetimes. The ship has several missions: to give tertiary care for patients sent by other missions, to do primary care and immunizations for remote areas and to show the American flag as "The alternative American Foreign Policy". We also aim to leave behind a lasting benefit to the country. Project HOPE has 25 years experience as an NGO with these aims. We are here to augment the Navy with medical specialists. About half of the civilian staff is from Massachusetts General Hospital, which has a long-term relationship with Project Hope.

I came here as the veterinarian to assess the animal health needs of the devastated area. Regrettably I was unable to make contact with local veterinarians or the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture so I made some very limited observations of the animals. I have seen cattle, goats, sheep, chickens, ducks, dogs, and cats. They look a little thin but otherwise healthy. I didn't see any dead animals. These were my observations by just riding around the city.

Since I was limited to the above as animal observations I lined up with the preventive medicine group both Navy and USPHS and contributed where I could to their assessments and recommendations that we are making to WHO and the Indonesian Ministry of Health. These areas are: water supply, sewage, infection control in the clinics, and vector control. Our approach is more the application of expect analysis and program recommendations useful for long term reconstruction rather than the delivery of these services for the immediate need. These have been very adequately delivered by the Australians, Germans, several other nations and numerous NGO's. Regrettably our preventive medicine efforts are hampered by our own command structure and the difficulty of dealing with a nation that had its own government problems followed by the natural disaster.

As a practical matter the situation is pretty good. There has been no public health crisis; there is much more URI than diarrheal disease and the domestic animals look good. We have not found any zoonotic disease. Leptospirosis could have been a major problem. The people are better off and they seem to appreciate our efforts. The political goals of the many constituencies here seem to have been realized.

I'm thinking of the desirability of including a veterinarian on future disaster missions. My contribution to the animal needs and preventive medicine has been minimal. However, the situation could easily have been different with major acute problems of the domestic animals, an outbreak of avian flu, a zoonoses outbreak or a critical sanitary issue and perhaps history shows some of these. I think I represented veterinary medicine well among the other professions here and I seemed to be well liked. It has been good to show the face of veterinary medicine, and from an educational perspective I can say I appreciated my broad perspective from my veterinary medical degree.

Veterinary Medical Assistance Team (VMAT) Program

The Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams are classified as a national resource by the Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency, and have not been tasked for international missions to date. *For more information on the VMAT program and to learn how you and your clients can prepare for disasters, please visit www.avma.org/disaster.*

List of Volunteers To Aid in Disaster Relief Efforts

The AVMA has generated a list of veterinary professionals interested in assisting in Tsunami relief efforts. If you are interested in being added to the list and have international experience and a passport, please email your name and contact information to Dr. Cindy Lovern at clovern@avma.org for further instructions. This list of volunteer names is **not** associated with our VMAT program.

Web Sites For Additional Information On This Disaster

Visakha SPCA (very active locally)	www.ahimsatx.org/vspca
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/tsunamis/
Global Disaster Information Network	www.gdin.org
Center for International Disaster Information	www.cidi.org
US Agency for International Development	www.usaid.gov
American Red Cross	www.redcross.org
FAO emergency relief and rehabilitation	www.fao.org/reliefoperations/en/index.html
Humanitarian Early Warning Service	www.hewsweb.org/home_page/default.asp
ReliefWeb	http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf
Humane Society of the U.S.	www.hsus.org/hsus_field/hsus_disaster_center/index.html
World Society for the Protection of Animals	www.wspa.org.uk/index.php?page=1111