

Dominican Republic Campaign Report Dec. 2018



Rio San Juan - After a four year absence, the Animal Balance team once again returned to the north shore of the Dominican Republic, holding a 5-day spay/neuter campaign in partnership with Pets Breeding Control (based in Santo Domingo) and Proteccion Animal Cabrera. This campaign marked a welcome return for both the team and our partners, who had been working together regularly for many years.

The team, which consisted of Animal Balance Program Director Elsa Kohlbus and Animal Balance Program Manager, Megan Gram, along with 10 volunteer veterinarians, veterinary technicians and recovery and support volunteers, was joined by several local volunteers from our partner organizations and the local community, including veterinarian Geraldine Mejia and translator Grisel Batista, both from Pets Breeding Control, as well as Leo Fernandez and Lovely Alonso Falette, both volunteers with PAC .

Rio San Juan sits on the north coast of the island, between the more resort centered town of Cabarete, and the town of Cabrera, where AB has focused many previous campaigns. Rio San Juan is not often visited by spay/neuter groups and the community has little access to basic veterinary care for their companion animals. Additionally, the area is known for its beach dogs, which are not “owned” but are looked after loosely by those who work in the small restaurants and businesses that line the beaches, as well as a handful of animal advocates who live in the area. Animal Balance has a long history of helping beach dogs in the Dominican Republic, and the beach dogs of Playa Grande were a catalyst for AB Founder and Director Emma Clifford to provide spay/neuter to dogs in the area, where she lived in 2007-2008 and still owns a house.

A clinic space was located by PAC, centrally located on a main road in the village of Rio San Juan and easily accessible to members of the community. As is typical with many of the clinic locations that we have worked in in the Dominican Republic, there was limited access to electricity and running water. Our experience working in the area made prepared us for this, however, and the clinic site proved to be an ideal location for the campaign.



The team flew into Santo Domingo on Dec. 1st and made the three-hour drive north to Rio San Juan. Clinic set up took place on Dec. 2 and surgery began on the 3. This campaign marked the beginning of an effort by AB to reduce the amount of supplies carried in by the team. The supply list was pared down and everything was packed



efficiently into 4 suitcases, which included surgical instruments, medical supplies and all necessary medications. This included enough supplies for 250 surgeries. This campaign was to be a test run for this new packing list, which is geared toward making MASH style campaigns even more accessible to areas with limited resources or that are difficult to travel to. The team also eliminated the need for an anesthesia machine by using a solely injectable anesthetic protocol.



Oxygen tanks can be difficult to come by in some of the more remote areas that we work in, so eliminating the need and finding a way to work safely without one takes one more step towards making MASH accessible. Using an anesthetic cocktail of dexdomitor, telazol, and butorphanol makes the entire process more efficient, requiring just one initial injection to sedate the patient. Catheters are placed in each patient so that small doses may be administered intravenously throughout the course of surgery if necessary. Having used this protocol successfully on multiple campaigns, the medical team felt comfortable moving away from gas anesthesia. With this protocol, it should be noted, there is a heavier burden placed on the skills of the technicians, who must be adept at catheter placement and efficient with their prep time, and surgeons, who must be able to complete the procedures efficiently. These parameters were laid out to all volunteers prior to joining the campaign and Animal Balance was thrilled with the skill level displayed by all volunteers in their roles on this campaign.

Registration began at 8 am each morning, with a limit of 50 patients each day. The registration team included an AB veterinarian, a veterinarian from Pets Breeding Control, and several local, bilingual volunteers who assisted with translating between the clients and the AB team. Assistance with translation was crucial, in order to ensure that adequate communication occurred between animal caregivers and the medical team. Each patient was given a pre-surgical exam and the owners/caregivers were asked to wait with them until the team was ready to sedate each dog.

Surgery spots were quickly filled each day, as demand for services proved to be high, in particular for owners/caregivers of female dogs. The majority of the surgeries were dog spays, with a prevalence for larger breeds. There were many instances of pyometra, hydrometra, and postpartum dogs, making for more difficult surgeries for the doctors. This had been anticipated during the recruitment process, however, and all of the doctors chosen for this trip proved to be up to the task of performing spay after spay after spay.

Due to the limited number of crates that were available to use for the clinic, owners were asked to come and assist with the recovery of their dogs post-op. This resulted in creating a social setting in recovery 2, as owners gathered with their dogs chatting and waiting for the anesthesia to wear off enough for them to bring their dogs home.

The clinics ran smoothly for 5 days, with a total of 252 cats and dogs sterilized over the course of the week. The medical team was pleased with the results of the injectable drug protocol and there were just enough supplies for the number of surgeries that were performed, with things running low on the last day.



Overall, Animal Balance is thrilled with the results of this campaign. We were able to sterilize a high number of animals, with an extremely low instance of

complications throughout the week, despite the difficult nature of many of the surgeries.

Animal Balance was also pleased to be able to offer this service to many of the local beach dogs, who were brought in by local animal welfare advocates. The beach dogs are notorious and well-loved in the area. On the final day of the trip the team visited one of the beaches and got to visit several dogs that we sterilized previously in the week. Being able to see the dogs in their own environment, happy and playing on the beach, was a great affirmation for the team and the perfect way to end the trip. Animal Balance looks forward to continuing to build our relationships with our partners in the Dominican Republic, and hopes to return to the area again soon.

Surgery Breakdown:

12/3: 35 routine spays, 7 neuters, 9 pregnant or other: Total - 51

12/4: 28 routine spays, 11 neuters, 12 pregnant or other: Total - 51

12/5: 28 routine spays, 10 neuters, 14 pregnant or other: Total - 52

12/6: 26 routine spays, 1 previous spay, 14 neuters, 4 pregnant or other: Total - 45

12/7: 17 routine spays, 16 neuters, 20 pregnant or other: Total - 53

Overall total: 252

Females: 193

Males: 59