

# Nachrichten von April 2003 & Oktober 2003

ZIMBABWE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS  
PVO 38/69

SPCA Member Centres:

Beitbridge - Bulawayo - Chegutu - Chinhoyi - Chiredzi - Gweru - Harare - Hwange - Kadoma - Kwekwe - Marondera - Mashava - Masvingo - Mutare - Zvishavane

30 MAY 2003

Busier than ever - but the team remains determined and positive. Sadly, a rather disturbing development during the more recent rescues has been a lack of cooperation from the ZRP. Meryl has assessed that because most of the rescues at present involve farms which have been taken over by MPs, 'chefs' and other senior party officials, there is a decided reluctance on the part of the police to get involved.

Herewith are details of some of the cases dealt with by Meryl and her team during April and May (usually without police escort).

The ZNSPCA were tipped off about dogs that had been abandoned on a farm in the Ruwa area after the owner had left the country. The team found 3 black Labradors in very poor and malnourished condition despite a worker claiming that he was 'looking after them'. The female which had badly deformed legs (a birth defect) was removed and euthanased as she would have been difficult to rehome. The two males are being cared for and will be rehomed.

A call was received from a farmer's wife from the Mazoe area. The family were evicted from their farm in September last year but the farmer had continued farming by going to the farm daily. A few weeks ago, the farmer suddenly found himself barricaded in by the resident war vet and he was held hostage for several hours. He was finally released and told never to return. The farmer's wife asked Meryl if she could uplift their Siamese cat and have him euthanased as they would have to leave the country.

Meryl and the new ZNSPCA vet assistant, Erick Samva, went to the farm in the morning in order to avoid the war vet who is usually only present in the afternoon. One of the workers opened the gate and the team found that the homestead was deserted apart from a few remaining looted goods on the lawn and a truck full of looted timber which had been abandoned as the truck would not start. The other workers on the farm told the team that they had all lost their jobs since the farmer had been evicted and they did not know where to go.

Meryl found a beautiful long-haired Siamese lying on the verandah - painfully thin but purring loudly and obviously pleased to see her. As the owners had requested he be PTS, they decided to save him the trauma of taking him from his life-long home, the long trip and noise and smells of the kennels. In Meryl's own words "we drove a short distance and parked in the shade of some gum trees. I held him in my arms as Erick slipped the needle into the vein in his leg - he was still purring as his head slumped on my arm".

The team were alerted to the situation on another farm in Ruwa. 'Settlers' had occupied part of the farm, but not the house. The owners, a young couple, had decided to relocate to South Africa but had assured everyone that they were taking their dogs with them. ZNSPCA were tipped off that the dogs had been abandoned. The team checked the farm house and found the house was occupied by an unemployed person who had brought in 5 dogs of his own. The team removed a very ill Scottie female with a severe respiratory infection. She has since been treated, spayed and rehomed. The vet found that her ovaries were also badly infected and said that she must have been feeling very poorly for several weeks. The vet said he had known 'Tok-tok' since she was a puppy and was shattered that she had been left behind. The present occupant insisted that the owners would be returning for their other dogs. ZNSPCA will continue to monitor the situation.

In a most disturbing case, the ZNSPCA received a call from another farmer's wife concerning 30+ cats which had been left behind on a farm in the Concession area. The couple had been evicted from their farm in January but the wife was concerned about all the cats which had been left 'up in the barns'. She reported that the cats were her husband's 'hobby' and that all were tame. She asked that the cats be uplifted to Harare SPCA and she would chose which ones to keep and the rest to be PTS. She later changed her mind and said they could all 'go'. The team found the gate to the premises locked but after much hooting one of the resident war vet's workers let them in.

The team again decided to save the cats unnecessary trauma and euthanase them in situ. A message had been left that the war vet wanted to keep the cats, but the team found that many of the animals were sick with 'snuffles', all were unsterilised and there were the usual signs of weakness and poor development resulting from interbreeding. The worker called the cats and 'Whiskas' were dished out liberally for them - they were all very hungry. It was found that none of animals were tame with each one spitting, scratching

and biting - the exercise proved to be quite stressful for the cats - and the team. They sprayed euthanase into the cats' mouths to sedate them slightly. They managed to PTS 20 animals on the first visit but had to give up around 4.00pm when light started to fade and the cats became more difficult to catch.

The team returned four days later and euthanased another 19 cats - another long battle - finishing at 4.30pm. The last few cats had hidden in the large pipes stacked at the back of the barn. The team had to dismantle the pipes one at a time in order to get them out.

Probably the most disturbing aspect of this case was when two workers described to Meryl and Erick how they used to dispose of unwanted litters - they would put their boots on, roll the kittens up in a piece of plastic and then jump and trample on them. They stated they had been disposing of kittens in this manner for the past five years. All in a very unpleasant task for the team, but they have at least put an end to any more of this horrific suffering.

Last week the team were called to the Centenary area to uplift a female pony. The family had been evicted 3 months previously and despite all efforts, could not get back onto the farm. They were also concerned as water had been cut off to 'Milly'. This time Support Unit were present, as the family were removing their belongings at the same time. The 'settlers' had been advised that the family would be coming to remove their possessions so they had felled a huge tree across the road to try and prevent access. Meryl managed to drive the pick-up and horse-box around the tree. The team found Milly and despite concerns that she might be difficult to load, she was so hungry she followed Meryl (walking backwards holding a dish of cubes) straight into the horse-box.

We are very pleased to report that after nearly two years of trying to improve the living conditions of the baboons at the University of Zimbabwe, Meryl finally negotiated with the Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science for the release of the 3 remaining healthy baboons which were being kept in concrete and metal cages at the University. A mature female who was captured as a juvenile in the Kariba area and two juveniles who were born at the University - 'Tiggy', a female, and 'Jimmy', a male, were released into a large grassy enclosure at the Lion and Cheetah Park complete with a tree, platform, logs and hanging tyres - none of which the youngsters had ever seen before, including sunshine. Meryl said they were trembling with excitement and anxiety but once they had retreated upwards and started eating fresh oranges, they soon settled down. There is still an elderly adult male at the University, but the Dean is reluctant to release the baboon as he has not been well for some time. Meryl will continue to monitor his welfare.

On the same note, in the midst of the rescues, the ZNSPCA have made regular visits to the Blair Research and Government Analyst Laboratories in Harare to monitor the welfare of their animals i.e. rats, mice, guinea-pigs, rabbits and hamsters. The conditions they found on their earlier visits were appalling but Meryl reports that there has been a huge improvement. They will continue to monitor the situation and work with the staff to maintain the best standards for the care of the animals.

Disappointingly we have learned that National Parks have now obtained a third Leopard (male) to replace the female that died in Abuja and the female that died, inexplicably, whilst in the custody of National Parks, who maintain that she was ill when they received her. The reports Meryl has received about the male are that he is very stressed and has several facial abrasions from trying to escape.

Whilst engaged on farm rescues, the team came across a sad case of an elderly female 'hoarder'. The team have removed many of the animals - some have been euthanased and some have been rehomed. Conditions have improved greatly with support from ZNSPCA who will continue to work with the owner.

Meryl left for a farm in Mtorashanga early this morning in response to a plea from a family who were being evicted. They were taking their pets but asked the team to uplift 2 pet Duiker, 30 Geese and several tame Guinea Fowl.

Following another tip off, the ZNSPCA has uncovered a dog-fighting ring in Arcadia, a suburb of Harare. The names of the perpetrators have been established. Staffies and Pit Bulls were being used. Investigations continue and prosecutions will follow.

The large male cheetah which we reported on earlier last year who was caught in a snare in the Marula area has now been released in the Limpopo area. He has been fitted with a radio collar supplied by ZNSPCA courtesy of AfriCat and will be monitored by Viv Wilson whose initial report said that the cheetah was doing very well and was hunting.

Another encouraging achievement is that agreement has been reached with Cotco (Cotton Company) that they will place water troughs for donkeys at all Cotco Depots throughout the country.

All indications are that mass stayaways and protest marches will commence in most urban areas next week. We have launched appeals to members of the public to ensure the safety of their pets during any unrest and to make sure that they also have adequate supplies of pet food. Security companies and livestock-owners have been requested to take necessary measures to ensure that all animals are fed and watered every day.

We will remain in close liaison with the NSPCA in South Africa during the days ahead, in the event of further crisis.

Best Regards Bernice

23 JUNE 2003

Chief Inspector Harrison ailing

Sadly but not surprisingly, the strain of the last three years have taken their toll on our valiant Meryl, who continues bravely to head the rescues in Zimbabwe under increasingly difficult conditions. Our '60-something' Chief Inspector has suffered from a heart condition since she was a young woman but has always kept her condition and the pain and discomfort she experiences hidden from most. She has on several occasions been rushed to hospital to stabilise her heart rate, but the incidents have become increasingly frequent and it is now essential that she undergoes the necessary 'keyhole' surgery (electrical ablation) to prevent a potentially fatal attack. The operation is not available in Zimbabwe and it will be necessary for Meryl to travel to South Africa for the procedure to be carried out. With the non-availability of foreign currency in Zimbabwe, we would like to appeal to anyone who could assist in this regard to contact our sister organisation in South Africa, the NSPCA - [spca@global.co.za](mailto:spca@global.co.za). In recognition of the invaluable role that Meryl has played in rescuing and safeguarding literally hundreds of thousands of animals, we would like to do all that we can to help our brave champion. We realise how generous and supportive everyone has been with contributions towards the valiant work of the rescue team but are confident you will help if you can or pass this on to anyone who is in a position to assist with ensuring that Meryl will be able to continue with her outstanding animal welfare work in the future.

Bernice Robertson Dyer  
National Chairman

ZNSPCA  
P O Box 470  
Kadoma  
Zimbabwe  
Phone: 263 68 24037  
Fax: 263 68 23443  
E-mail: [conroc@mweb.co.zw](mailto:conroc@mweb.co.zw)

18 JULY 2003

In a fitting tribute to our valiant Meryl, we received an entirely overwhelming response from the local and international public and media to enable Meryl to undergo an essential heart operation. She had a difficult few days prior to surgery but the procedure went well and she was fitted with a pace-maker on 16 July.

Meryl had a busy few weeks before leaving for Joburg. The farm occupations have 'hotted up' again. Meryl was called to a farm which had been allocated to an 'A2' farmer (indigenous commercial farmer) but the war vets and 'settlers' refused to leave. The farmer's dairy herd (approximately 260 head) were confined to a small field without any grazing. The youths present on the farm were very militant. They pushed and shoved the farmer and incited the women to sing 'Chimurenga' songs when Meryl attempted to negotiate for the release of the cattle. They verbally abused Meryl, Mark and Erick and instructed them to chant party slogans. When they did not comply, one youth threatened Meryl with an axe. When they complied, they were forced to repeat the slogan because they had not raised their fists high enough. Authorities admit to having no control over the situation. The team stood their ground and it was finally agreed that the farmer could bring food to the animals but they could not be released to graze. The farmer indicated that he had no choice but to arrange for the animals to be taken for slaughter as he would be unable to continue farming under prevailing conditions. One can only guess who is 'pulling the strings' in these situations. Meryl reported that whilst they were there, a truck load of beer was delivered to the farm.

We remain concerned about horses which have been left behind on farms. Despite the hundreds of horses which have been rehomed or euthanised, there are still many animals which need to be recovered. Meryl found one mare which had been left behind 2 years ago - once a family pony - in the most tragic circumstances. The mare was being used as a work-horse by a settler. When Meryl tracked down the settler, he told Meryl that the horse had collapsed on the way home the night before. It was discovered that the horse had been ridden so hard that she had collapsed, resulting in massive hemorrhaging. Her rear hooves were found to have been worn right down to the bone. She was euthanised to prevent any further suffering.

We are also concerned by reports that some horses may have been sent to Zambia, Mozambique and even the DRC. The ZNSPCA stands by its position that animals should not be rehomed outside of Zimbabwe, where the future welfare or fate of the animals cannot be ascertained.

Meryl was called to an Ostrich farm in Bromley last week. The farmer was barricaded into his house and had phoned Meryl to advise that the war vets were preventing the farm workers from feeding and watering the birds. Meryl managed to secure a police escort

to the farm. On arrival the war vets advised them that the Ostriches were fine and were receiving food and water. The police accepted this explanation and said that they should all leave. Meryl had noticed that there was no sign of workers but noticed men in overalls milling around the workers' houses. She pointed this out and said she was going to check with the workers. The police said that they would not escort the ZNSPCA team. Meryl pointed out that they had been assigned to accompany them and they were going to investigate with or without the policemen. The two details trailed behind the team. The workers confirmed that the birds were not being attended to. Meryl did not want a repeat of an earlier incident where farm workers were badly beaten after the rescue team left a farm - she returned to the war vets and negotiated for the farm workers to be permitted to tend to the birds. They finally agreed to allow only 2 workers to give food and water to the birds. Still concerned for the welfare of the birds and the workers, Meryl was very relieved when she received a most appreciative phone call from the farmer who could see the Ostriches through his windows and confirmed that all was quiet and that the birds were being given food and water.

We are very sad to report that having finally secured all permits and authority necessary to relocate the last chimpanzee remaining in Zimbabwe to Chimfunshi in Zambia, nine year old Billy died in the morning of 10 July. Meryl was returning from a rescue when she received the news. She called from the roadside to convey the news to us - Billy had fallen ill the day before and declined rapidly. Despite all efforts, his heart failed. Initial results indicate that he died of a venomous snake bite. He had been well cared for and had not been confined to a cage but had never been with his own kind since he was smuggled into the country as a baby. Everyone was elated about his imminent trip to Zambia to join other chimps, so it is a devastating blow when he was only a week or two away from being relocated. The man who had been caring for him said it was just like losing a child.

On a happier note, the Dean at the University of Zimbabwe has given his consent for the release of the small group of Vervet monkeys from this institution. The conditions the monkeys were being kept in was not as severe as the baboons but it is the final step in having all primates removed from the University. The remaining baboon referred to in our previous report will have to be euthanised as there has been no improvement in his condition. There has been too much damage to internal organs as a result of the introduction of bilharzia schistosomes into his system in the past.

On behalf of Meryl and the ZNSPCA team, please may we extend our appreciation to everyone who contributed in any way with assisting Meryl to receive her heart operation in South Africa. The wonderful messages and tributes which have flooded in have assisted immeasurably in getting her through this difficult time.

No doubt, everyone joins us in wishing her a speedy recovery and much improved good health.

Thank you all

Bernice

15 AUGUST 2003

Once again, we thank all of the individuals, organisations and businesses who made it possible for Meryl to receive her heart operation. She is well on the road to recovery - 'on the road' being exactly where she is - having been given the all clear to start driving again.

Meryl has just returned from a very fruitful Baboon Control Stakeholders' meeting with the Timber Producers Federation in Juliasdale. The animal welfare concerns raised by the ZNSPCA are being taken seriously and Meryl was gratified that throughout the meeting, National Parks referred to the ZNSPCA as their 'colleagues'. Timber Producers have welcomed the participation of the ZNSPCA who will be consulted and invited to monitor any problem animal control exercises. They have also indicated that they would welcome any alternative methods for the humane management of problem animals.

In spite of the deterioration of law enforcement in Zimbabwe, we are pleased to report that all cases which have been brought to court by the ZNSPCA this year have been won. The owner of the ex-Tredar dog which died after he had failed to take the animal for veterinary attention, which was reported on earlier this year, was found guilty. Two other cases involving neglect of a herd of cattle and cruelty towards a cattle pony in Gweru were also won.

Meryl returned to the Ostrich farm in Bromley which was reported on in July. Despite not having been served with a Section 8 Notice, the farmer has now been evicted. He will be sending the entire flock for slaughter apart from a few birds which he will attempt to relocate.

The Rescue Team have carried out three rescues since Meryl's return. They received a report of dogs having been abandoned on Groovy Tuesday Farm. Two Labradors were rescued and both have been rehomed.

In Mtorashanga, the army gave a farmer 24 hours notice to evacuate but they were unable to load their three dogs - 2 Collie X's, 'Shumba' and 'Sally' and a Rotty X, 'Major'. The Team went to the farm without a police escort and managed to rescue all three animals

- one had been left tied up at the front gate.

In one of the worst cases the Team has yet had to deal with, an elderly farmer and his wife were attacked in Marondera. Both are in their 70's. The farmer was called to the front gate and whilst he was distracted 4 men entered the house through the back - they were all armed with thick wooden poles. The farmer was badly beaten, his hands and feet tied and then tied together. The assailants wrapped him in a tablecloth and then put an armchair on top of him. At that stage he was struggling to breath.

Three of the assailants claimed to be War Veterans and were elderly. The other assailant was young and attempted to rape the farmer's wife. She is currently receiving ARV treatment. The farmer required several stitches to close the wounds on his head.

The farmer's domestic worker and his wife were brought in with their baby and 4 year old child. The couple were assaulted in the presence of the young child and whilst the baby was still on the wife's back.

All were then tied up and the assailants loaded up the farmer's truck with property and left. They returned later for another load. The farmer's wife finally managed to free herself and broke out of the house.

One of the family's Scotty dogs 'Timolina' had a wound across her back where she had been hit. The other Scotty 'Lizzy' had run away and when she did not return the following day, Sunday, the team went out on Monday, happily to find that she had returned uninjured but was very traumatised. She sat next to Meryl on the way back to Harare and wouldn't leave her side. The Team returned to help the family clear up the house which had been completely 'trashed' during the attack.

The wildlife situation remains cause for very grave concern. Hunters from here and abroad are capitalising on the chaotic situation as well as other unscrupulous individuals who are claiming that the wild animals on occupied farms are a natural resource to be exploited. Hunting concessions are being handed out in excess of recommended quotas. It is basically 'open season' - even the 'presidential elephants' in Hwange are being poached.

Regards

Bernice