

FIRST U.S. VETERINARY TEAM GIVES HOMELESS ‘BANANA HOUNDS’ IN ST. LUCIA CHANCE FOR HEALTHY, HAPPY LIVES THANKS TO VOLUNTEER EFFORTS

VCA and Sterling Animal Shelter Partner with International Veterinary Assistance, Inc. to Staff Spay and Neuter Clinic in St. Lucia, West Indies and Provide Care for Needy Animals

STERLING, MA—August 13, 2003—For the first time ever, a volunteer U.S. based veterinary team will travel to St. Lucia in the Caribbean to staff a spay/neuter clinic where nearly 100 homeless and stray animals will receive much-needed veterinary care. In close cooperation with the St. Lucian Animal Protection Society, this unique collaboration between International Veterinary Assistance (IVA), VCA Animal Hospitals and the Sterling Animal Shelter involves sending one VCA veterinarian and two surgical veterinarian technicians to St. Lucia for the seven-day clinic from September 13-19, 2003. Generous donations of veterinary supplies, vaccinations and products provided by VCA, Fort Dodge Animal Health and Henry Schein, Inc. enable the volunteers to spay, neuter and vaccinate nearly over a hundred animals that might not otherwise receive medical care.

“VCA Animal Hospitals is proud to be a partner in a program that is making a real difference in the lives of St. Lucia’s homeless and stray animals. We are deeply committed to protecting the welfare of animals everywhere, including St. Lucia,” said VCA’s Rachel Kiessling, DVM. “By spaying, neutering and vaccinating these animals, we are minimizing the overpopulation problem and ensuring that they have a better chance to live healthier, happier lives,” she added.

While all participating groups are committed to protecting the welfare of animals, the specific mission of IVA is to promote the humane management of stray and feral companion animals abroad. IVA mobilizes local and international veterinary resources and collaborates with animal protection societies, the tourism sector, leading businesses and organizations like VCA and Sterling Animal Shelter to create and support change for the stray animals on the island.

“We hope that this type of program can be replicated on other islands, where the numbers of stray dogs and cats has been rising sharply due to the abundance of food during the main tourist season,” explained Mehrdad Nazari, president of IVA. “Sadly, the vast majority of these strays are in poor health, infected with parasites and diseases, and produce 2-5 litters each year, compounding the existing problems,” he added.

“Though the general public may not realize it, overpopulation forces three to four million pets in the U.S. to be killed annually and the overpopulation epidemic is a worldwide crisis,” said Leigh Grady, executive director of the Sterling Animal Shelter, and one of the two vet techs traveling with the volunteer team to St. Lucia. “VCA, Fort Dodge and Henry Schein are all supportive of animal shelters, rescue groups and outreach programs, so it was only natural to team up with them for this worthwhile life-saving effort to try to mitigate overpopulation. Without their generous support, the trip would not be possible. I also want to recognize Kristin Ruggiero of the VCA Northboro Animal Hospital, who was responsible for setting up the contacts with these generous suppliers,” she added.

Grady plans to involve more veterinarians and technicians each year to help those communities that are less fortunate and have an overwhelming need for assistance.

In addition to IVA (www.DVMassist.org), the collaborative partnership includes VCA Antech, Inc. (NASDAQ: WOOF), who operates the largest network of freestanding, full-service animal hospitals across the country and employs more than 800 veterinarians at over 240 animal hospitals, as well as the largest network of veterinary-exclusive clinical laboratories in the nation; Henry Schein, Inc., the largest distributor of healthcare products to office-based practitioners in the combined North American and European markets; Fort Dodge Animal Health, leading manufacturer and distributor of prescription and over-the-counter animal health care products for the livestock and companion animal industries; and Animal Shelter, Inc. of Sterling, Massachusetts, a non-profit, no-kill shelter with no time, age or breed limitations.

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