

Cook Islands' Honey



Many of us have been overseas and had our trip tainted by seeing stray or sick animals, or animals that are caged or treated badly. But it takes a special person to act and make things better.

CATHY Sue Ragan-Anunsen is one such special person. While holidaying in Rarotonga in 1993, Cathy Sue made friends with a local dog Honey, and wanted to make a donation to an animal welfare group that locals were organising. She learnt that there was no veterinarian for the country's thousands of cats and dogs, many were suffering from a variety of diseases, there was no spay-neuter programme, and that the authorities were shooting dogs for population control. Cathy Sue returned to the United States and formed The Esther Honey Foundation named in honour of her grandmother, Esther, and her inspirational Cook Islands

companion. In 1995, with the help of many partners and supporters, the foundation sent its first team of volunteer veterinary professionals and all the equipment, medications and supplies required to establish the first Esther Honey Foundation Animal Clinic.

The Esther Honey Foundation is now an integral part of island culture providing the only veterinary care to the entire Cook Islands nation. The EHF operates a fully functional veterinary clinic, temporary animal shelter, and companion animal export and re-homing service thanks to the goodwill of donors and volunteers. In 14 years, the EHF has conducted 96 EHF Vet Treks® to outer islands, treated just under 20,000 animals and contributed more than \$US2 million in goods, services and foreign aid to the Cook Islands. The foundation recruits 35 to 50 volunteers annually including 130 veterinarians (to date) and hundreds of other volunteers.

THE NEW ZEALAND CONNECTION

New Zealander Karen Galvan learnt of the Esther Honey Foundation while on holiday in 2005 and now provides marketing and fundraising expertise complimentary to the foundation. Karen says 'I am amazed at the incredible presence the organisation has in the Cook Islands and the level to which the EHF operates thanks to the support of dedicated locals and the endless stream of vets, vet nurses and interns that come from all over the world to give their time freely. The EHF programmes offer the ability for island communities to permanently reduce their stray animal populations, improve animal health and significantly enhance the holiday experience for tourists. The problem of homeless animals is a global one and many South Pacific islands have yet to even start to humanely address their animal population issues'.

Karen and her fundraising committee's first project was a charity auction in Auckland last November, which very successfully raised funds and launched the EHF into New Zealand. Karen is very excited about her role, and the new phase that the New Zealand branch and increased publicity will bring for the foundation.

Karen says 'There is huge appreciation for the support from New Zealand with many kiwi supporters and organisations donating food and medicinal supplies. In 2007, Masterpet donated a pallet of pet food which kept our island animals fed for months. This contribution meant, for that time, we could spend donated money on valuable medicinal supplies. We also receive yearly support from Reef Shipping and Air NZ who help us send needed donated supplies to the islands'.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Go onto the Esther Honey Foundation website (www.estherhoney.org) to:

- Make a cash donation using the foundation's online credit card facility.
- Make a donation direct to EHFNZ account: Westpac, Queen St, 03 0104 0488741 00
- Visit the EHF on Rarotonga and let others know about their work on behalf of Cook Islands' animals.
- Sign up to receive their newsletter via the website.
- Support the many businesses and organisations that support the Esther Honey Foundation (listed on the EHF website).

