



Kia orana!

**I've always dreamed of volunteering for an organisation like Esther Honey Foundation.** When I was a vet student, I saw my friends leaving for some volunteering during our holidays. I couldn't afford the travel but now, since nearly two years, I live my dream.

I left Belgium 23 months ago with my partner JF. We drove our car (our Mazou) through 19 countries from Belgium to Australia. On our way, our project is to help nature conservation organisations, especially those who deal with endangered species, to reach awareness of the big public.

We volunteer also for organisations that help domestic animals; organisations that try to establish a stable population (by desexing) with as consequence less impact on the native animals. Of course, we like our pets but they represent a big threat to wildlife if they roam around freely. In addition, by establishing their population, we keep them healthy; their immunity increases and they can easier face diseases. As a veterinarian, we sometimes think more then just helping one individual animal; there is a lot of management involved.

While the car is on the boat to South America from Australia, we were thinking of 'some holidays'. Our decision to come to Rarotonga and stay at the clinic was even better. We were so close to a place we always wanted to visit, a place on the other side of the world for a Belgian.

**It was working in paradise.** Every day we switched between consults, surgeries, census and house visits. Any kind of animal passed in front of our eyes. I wrestled with a cow under the attentive eye of a Polynesian warrior and received a big smile each time we checked out a desexed animal. Even putting a pig on fluids, treating a white tail tropic bird; everything is possible and with a minimum of material, you can help already many animals. Working 'on the field' teaches you to be creative, adapt your treatment and deal with the medicine available at the clinic.

By helping the animals, you help the people of the community. The locals were really thankful. No need to buy food for us. The locals donated great grapefruits, eggs, bread and even 7 kg of succulent bacon.

**It is one of the first times that we felt that we were not just 'western volunteers coming from overseas' doing the job the local government don't want to face.**



My biggest joy was to teach some skills of my profession to the vet students and even to Malin, vet nurse and Gregg, the clinic director. I worked with more than three different nationalities and we were all complementary.

Even JF who is an engineer had his hands full cleaning the cages, feeding, going on census and helping wherever he could.

Education is definitely a big part of Esther Honey Foundation's work. The presence of the clinic and the simple medical explanations to any problem with their pet changes the life of the locals.

Thanks a lot to Gregg and all the volunteers who were there for the great time we spent with you.

We are now continuing our journey and for those who want to follow us, you can have a look on our website **[www.bearoundtheworld.be](http://www.bearoundtheworld.be)**

Juliet and JF