

Utopia Trip #6 2014

Utopia is an indigenous homelands community, and is roughly 300km north east of Alice Springs and covers 3500 sq kilometres. The appearance of Utopia is a rich red ground, followed by much greener vegetation at the moment due to the rain this area has seen recently (much of which was seen on our trip, bringing the wildlife closer to the roads for drinking water), with a beautiful sky that goes on forever. The population is spread out across 16 outstations in the Utopia area, all of which we endeavour to visit.



Photo of Sandover highway

The Canberra mob set out on the 4th April 2014 on their sixth trip to the Utopia community. The team of veterinarians/nurses and volunteers consisted of Alison Taylor, Michael Archinal, John Taylor, Jan Allen, Nicole Bell, Sonna Schramm, David Bond, and Courtney Ames. We were assisted by the Barkley Shire team Brian Radovic, Scotty, Sam and Karen Lightowler from the Central Desert Shire, who helped us within the outstations as well as in Alice Springs.

Half our team went out to the Central Desert – Harts Range (Atitjere) and Engawala, - for the first time to see if we could help with an ongoing program after the Central Desert Shire approached us. There is a lot of work to be done in these communities, and after only having three working days here we had already desexed 49 animals from three outstations – Atitjere, Irrelirre and Engawala. There were a few interesting animals brought into the practice to be health checked such as a duck, 2 turtles and a python.



The children at Harts Range were happy to see us, and came across as very interested in what we were doing for their animals. They then went on to show our team how to get the 'tree honey' from the local trees to eat, which they invited us to try with them. A few locals also cooked up kangaroo, and invited us to try this with them. On Sunday the sixth of April, the team packed up and travelled back to Alice Springs to collect the rest of the team that had just flown in for the week ahead at Utopia. The shopping for the week was already done and it was time to split between three trucks and travel 300kms to Urapuntja, where two small huts were set up for our stay. We unpacked and started to get everything ready for the following day and week at Arlparra.

We set up the clinic at Arlparra much like a normal practice. There was a fridge for all our cold drugs, a small recovery area, a separate scrub room for the vets to scrub and the instruments to be washed and 4 surgery tables. We began setting out to communities, to see how their animals are going, administer Ivermectin treatment for parasite control, and ask the locals if they had any animals they wanted 'fixed' (desexed).

We were happy to see dogs we had previously treated and desexed on our other trips improving in body condition and happy to greet us. Alison and Sonna headed out to Atheley at the beginning of the day where they were able to enlist the help of the children to get one 'cheeky' dog for surgery, while Michael and Courtney went to the settlements at Arlparra and collected a litter of puppies to desex.



The weather was comfortable. It rained a few times on the trip which made some of the roads hard to travel, but we still went to each outstation to see if they wanted anything done for their animals. A change from other trips was the number of cats that each outstation needed 'fixed'. This was usually one or two, but on this trip the total was 25, a marked difference.

The children were on school holidays, so spent their days outside playing in the basketball court adjacent to where our clinic was set up. They were very interested in who's dog was being operated on and what our instruments were used for. On Tuesday, when we had a break in surgeries the children were interested in the stethoscopes we had on the table, so we explained what they are used for and got each of them to use it to find each others heart beat.

As there was sorry business going on at a few outstations we decided to set up a clinic at Boundry Bore for a day, and have two separate practices working. So on Wednesday Alison, Nicole and Karen headed out to Boundry Bore, and left the rest of us at Alparra to work on the dogs we had brought in from Atnwengerrpe an outstation we hadn't been to before. While working at Boundry Bore the girls were able to ivermectin treat the local dogs and managed to 'fix' 5 dogs before returning to Arlparra, to help us return dogs back to their camps for the evening.



Most nights we prepared for the following days work. This was done over a group dinner, where we could chat about the day gone. The team worked really well together, and interacted where we could with the locals. On one of our last nights at Urapuntja all team members gathered at the 'girls hut' for a BBQ and damper cooked out on the fire. It was a perfect moment to reflect on the work we had done for the communities in the week that was. During our week at Utopia we visited Arlparra, Atheley, Soapy Bore, Soakage, Camel Camp, Atnwengerrpe, Boundary Bore, Rocket Range, Three Bores, Mosquito Bore, Kurrajong Apungalindum, Thommohawk and Antarengeny. From these outstations and Harts Range we managed to desex 138 animals.

The following table summarizes the amount of dogs and cats, males and females we desexed and from what outstations of Utopia.

| Camp Name | Male | Female | Total | Average Body Cond | Average Sarcopt Score | Comments |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Atitjere - DOG | 10 | 17 | 27 | 2 | 0.4 | Tick infested, TVT? |
| CAT | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Irrelirre - DOG | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2.3 | 0.3 | |
| CAT | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Engawala - DOG | 8 | 8 | 16 | 2.65 | 0 | |
| CAT | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 0 | |
| Arlparra - DOG | 11 | 5 | 16 | 1.56 | 0.7 | Lice infested |
| CAT | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Atheley - DOG | 2 | 5 | 7 | 1.85 | 0 | TVT |
| CAT | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 0 | |
| Soapy Bore - DOG | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | Eye tumour removed |
| CAT | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Soakage - DOG | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1.5 | 0 | |
| CAT | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Camel camp - DOG | 3 | 4 | 7 | 1.7 | 0 | Tick infested, TVT x2 |
| CAT | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Atnwengerpe - DOG | 14 | 13 | 27 | 2 | 0.6 | 1xEuth, Lice, Ticks |
| CAT | 2 | 8 | 10 | 2 | 0 | |
| Boundary Bore - DOG | 4 | 1 | 5 | 2.2 | 1 | |
| CAT | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Apungalindum - DOG | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| CAT | 2 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 0 | |
| TOTAL | 65 | 73 | 138 | Average 1.35 | Average 0.12 | Total for all trips 784 |



