

THE SPECIALIST CONNECTION

What we got up to in 2014!



This year in January we had the wonderful Dr Damian Chase (el Damo) join our team. Damian has fitted into our team with seamless and cheeky ease. Like Helen and Brent, Damian has many years of experience in the UK and it has been great having his expertise added to the Vetspecs team. Damian's arrival meant that Helen was able to take some time out and enjoy some adventures overseas. Helen explored the freezing cold interior of Alaska (arrived to a balmy -32F no less!) for 2.5 months with 13 sled dogs and fortunately managed to return home with all fingers and toes intact! Brent spent time in India where he showcased New Zealand biomedical innovation and 3D-printed titanium technologies to institutions including the Indian Institute of Science and the Amrita University of Biotechnology.



We also introduced Melissa Roberts to the team. Melissa hails from New Plymouth and has completed her Bachelor in Veterinary Technology degree from Massey University in Palmerston North – read more about Melissa in our Staff Profile section.



Sadly, it has also been a year of a couple of goodbyes. Becky has ventured into further study and Kate is now our region's Hill's representative. We wish them both the very best in their future endeavours but we miss them and hope they will swing by for morning tea soon! Meanwhile, Lauren, Libby and Kristina are doing brilliant jobs of picking up where Kate and Becky left off. Good job, guys. Oh, and speaking of Lauren, she has helped NZ conservation this year by assisting "project Janszoon" with their important possum population and moving monitoring work in the Abel Tasman. As for Libby, you can read more about her adventures on Page 3.



Vetspecs was able to re-start its distant consulting service again this year and we sent Damo to our colleagues in the West coast, Otago and Nelson. This has been a great chance for vets and nurses to meet him in person and for clients to see a specialist without having to endure long >>>

journeys to Christchurch. Watch this space for more specialist consulting near you...

As for Dr T, well, this year Aparna marks the end of her second year of her residency. After several weeks of externships in Auckland, Melbourne and Massey University and a trip to the Gold Coast Science Week conference, she continues to expand her knowledge and experience and is handling her own (but still supervised) case load like a pro. She is also now a published author in the NZVJ! (see Sept 2014 9:1-12).

We have introduced some new surgical techniques in 2014, including hydraulic



sphincters for the treatment of canine urinary incontinence (see Issue 11 of The Specialist Connection), ureteral pigtail stenting and subcutaneous ureteral by pass system (SUBs) for treatment of feline ureteral obstruction. Vetspecs can now also offer negative pressure wound therapy, making wound care much more manageable and

cost effective for staff, clients and patients alike. Please see our services flyer later in this edition of the Specialist Connection for further information.

Regarding our commitment to bringing you CPD opportunities, journal clubs and CCEV meetings have been a huge hit throughout the year with record breaking attendances in Nelson, Christchurch and Invercargill. We would like to finish off this exciting year with a heart-felt thank you to all our supporting colleagues. We wish you, your family and friends a restful time over the Christmas and New Year holidays and look forward to serving you and your clients in 2015.



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- **Free CPD:** "Canterbury Cutting Edge Vets" evenings, "Journal Club" mornings, "The Specialist Connection" Newsletter, Annual South Island "Road Shows" and more
- **Merial Ancare SVS Vetspecs Surgical Intern/ Resident** training programmes

Vetspecs' Specialist Surgeons are all members of the New Zealand Institute of Surgical Veterinary Specialists (**NZISVS**). All Vetspecs' staff regularly attend & participate in national and international meetings to ensure our own continuing development.

We look forward to assisting you, your clients and their pets

Volunteer Extraordinaire

By Libby Leader

They say that sequels are never as good as the original... That is most probably the rule, but with every rule there are exceptions. With the risk of being disliked by diehard fans, I always found Terminator 2 to be better than the original, so why wouldn't SPAW's second trip to Samoa also be an exception to the rule?

In August 2013 a group of five volunteers travelled to Samoa to help with an organisation named SPAW (South Pacific Animal Welfare) and Samoa's Animal Protection Society (APS) to spay and neuter cats and dogs from local villages. This was SPAW's first volunteer mission in Samoa and they did a wonderful job despite members of the team leaving Apia with stomach bugs, swollen cat bites, infected itchy bites, and sunburn. Still, they still profess to having had the most amazing experiences. For years I have been curious about working with SPAW and, when I found out friends of mine had just returned from a trip to Samoa, I asked them questions about it constantly. Then, as the calendar rolled on to a New Year, Team Samoa were beginning to feel that need for travel and Vailima (Samoan beer) again. With the decision for the team to return in 2014 came two additions: another vet to share the work load and me (after bugging my friends with constant questions and enthusiasm, I seemed like the most likely choice).

This trip would be different because there was to be a Small Island Developing States (S.I.D.s) conference held in Samoa the week following our visit. This conference was of great importance to Samoa and its image so buildings were painted, the streets were cleared of any litter, and general maintenance done around the town. This also brought the amount of stray animals roaming the streets to the government's attention. APS and SPAW were contacted to help in the de-sexing of as many stray and roaming animals as we could on our trip.

Several of Team Samoa went to Apia a few days early to help set up and do some desexing. After three days work they had already desexed 100 animals and were getting low on supplies. The remainder of the team arrived late Saturday night with our suitcases bulging with those needed extra supplies. We were ready to start work the next day but found that Sunday was an important day of rest and worship in Samoa so we had the unexpected bonus of spending that day enjoying one of Samoa's beautiful beaches.



Team Samoa with the village priest and other local villagers.

Monday came and we all had a big hearty breakfast before leaving for that day's village. When we arrived, we were asked to head into the church to enjoy yet another amazing breakfast that the village had put on for us! Sitting at the head table decorated with beautiful flower arrangements and listening to their pastor give us appreciation, I couldn't help but feel like very full royalty.



Andy entertaining the sandy locals

As I started my work, I fumbled a little, a bit unsure of where to be (and slightly nervous - it has been a while since I have done any desexing) but it didn't take long to get into the flow of things. My first patient was a cryptorchid dog, covered in fleas and ticks and about three years old. Throughout the week we managed to desex a total of 372 animals. We also had several tumours to remove, a cherry eye repair and a few wounds and abscesses to fix. The villagers were very welcoming and interested in what we were doing. Every animal was given a vaccination, flea and worming treatment, antibiotics and pain relief.

After a hard day's work in the 32°C humidity, the team would venture to one of Apia's restaurants to unwind and try the interesting food on offer. One of my favourite dining experiences was when we sampled poke (pronounced po-key), made from fresh raw tuna in a coconut sauce. This didn't initially sound appetising to me and, with stories from others about stomach bugs, I wondered if it wasn't also a bit risky! However, I braved it out and was pleasantly surprised. Another 'delicacy' that Samoa had on offer was the artery-clogging deep fried sandwich. It consisted cheese and ham encased in two pieces of white bread, deep fried to perfection, and served with fries. >>>

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The week went by and we arrived at our final village on the Friday. This was to be our biggest day. We worked all day without a break and had to stop for the village curfew. There was a total of 75 desexing surgeries, and a whopping 86 animals registered on that Friday. By the end of the day, we were tired but exhilarated. What an excellent outcome from a wonderful week!

Saturday was for ourselves, with trips to the local markets, snorkelling at the local beach and then a long drive to the other side of the island to the most beautiful beach for some more fun in the sun. Our departure time drew closer and we sat in our beach fale, looking out at the beautiful view and soaking in the week just been.

So in review, the first trip to Samoa had five volunteers, one cat bite related course of antibiotics, five stomach bug incidences, and seven nice days filled with smiles. Trip number two consisted of seven volunteers, zero cat bites, no antibiotics, seven prepared people fully stocked with Imodium and Gaviscon and nine great days with huge smiles. Sounds like success to me and what an enlightening experience! I had an amazing time and would definitely do it again. I made some wonderful new friends and learnt

a lot about the Samoan culture, drug combinations, and even myself.

I highly recommend being a SPAW volunteer. SPAW travels to several other pacific islands to do similar programmes. These include Tonga, Fiji, Niue and the Cook Islands. There they work alongside the local animal protection agencies. There volunteers mainly focus on spaying

and neutering, parasite control and instigating/educating about vaccinations. To become a volunteer you can apply via the south pacific animal welfare website at www.spaw.org.nz. There you can also see what SPAW is about, read up about their protocols or even donate to this wonderful charity.

Life is too short not to give it a go!



Team Samoa

Dr Jen, Anaesthesia Extraordinaire

In October, the South Island was graced once more with a Road Show tour from Dr Jennifer Carter, Lecturer in Veterinary Anaesthesia based at the University of Melbourne. Jen, a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Anaesthesia and Analgesia, is an engaging speaker, as those who attended her Nelson, Christchurch and or Invercargill lectures can tell you. This was a Vetspecs event sponsored by Hills Pet Nutrition and Jurox.

Jen's talks covered how to anaesthetise compromised patients optimally. Starting with premedicants, we learnt the importance of their use in nearly every anaesthetic. However, she stressed that different premedicants do different

things. For example, whilst acepromazine causes peripheral vascular dilation, the alpha-2 agonists cause peripheral vasoconstriction. With knowledge of a drug's differing pharmacologies, we have the ability to address a patient's physiology optimally and therefore increase our level of patient care.

We also discussed common induction agents and the benefits of using Jurox's Alfaxan, including its possible use as a constant rate infusion for anaesthetic maintenance. Regarding gaseous agents, such as Isoflurane, Jen importantly reminded us that it doesn't have any analgesic properties.

Peri-operative analgesia was also a 'biggie' in her talks, with the pure opioid agonists such as morphine, methadone, and fentanyl, being favoured by Jen.

Jen's interests lay in educating veterinary students and veterinarians alike with the ultimate aim of improving anaesthesia in private practice settings. She also has a keen interest in the study and implementation of multimodal pain management in companion animals. These were a great series of talks. You didn't even feel like two hours had gone by and you were left wanting more! Vetspecs would like to thank Hills and Jurox for making these talks possible and we look forward to more in the future.



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STAFF PROFILE

Melissa Roberts – BVetTech – Qualified Veterinary Technician

Where did you complete your nursing studies?

I graduated from Massey University in Palmerston North in 2013. Being at Massey and going through the veterinary teaching hospital was great for gaining hands on experience and using the theory we were learning about in class. In our final year we get to pick what we would like to focus on. Out of business, production, equine or companion animals I followed my passion and selected the latter. This meant I was placed on a roster in the small animal hospital. There I spent several weeks going through the their many departments. These were anaesthesia, surgery, sterile supply and radiology. If I had to pick my favourite rotation, I would say it would be a close call between anaesthesia and surgery.

Tell us about your role at Vetspecs?

This is my first job after graduating. I am learning new skills, techniques and theories every week. I recently had the opportunity to place a urinary



Melissa with Keilana

catheter, this was both exciting and nerve racking. I think it is great that animal physio operates out of the same building, this means we can still see our patients and the wonderful progress they make.

Tell us a bit about your life outside the clinic.

As I am new to Christchurch, I am still trying to get out and explore the city.

However, the winter months have made this task slightly less achievable. I share a house with 3 flatmates and I enjoy spending time with them and my beautiful Birman cat, Keilana. She keeps me on my toes with her cheeky and curious attitude, and is settling in to Christchurch nicely. One of my favourite activities is enjoying time in the wonderful land of fiction, so, I can often be found with a book in my hand.

Where was the last place you went on holiday?

Does it still count as a holiday if the purpose of the trip was to pick something up? My last trip was to Hamilton and Paeroa. There I spent several hours strolling around Hamilton's shopping complex before collecting a new Birman kitten for my mum! If a trip to collect a kitten is not a suitable holiday, then I guess my last proper break was a trip back home to New Plymouth during the university holidays to catch up with my family.

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Reference: 1. Ryan, W, Moldave, K, Carithers, D. Clinical Effectiveness and Safety of a New NSAID, Firocoxib: A 1,000 Dog Study. *Veterinary Therapeutics* Vol 7, 119–126, 2006.

*Long term was evaluated over 40 days; short-term was evaluated over 10 days. Always read label instructions.



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Crossword

ACROSS

4. Surgical specialist Dr Damian ____ joined the team in January 2014 (5)
8. What is the trade name of the melanoma vaccine offered at Vetspecs? (6)
10. ____ was a sponsor for the 2014 Vetspecs Road Show. (5)
13. Merial Ancare have recently launched a new chewable flea product, trade name ____ (7)
15. Thinking about 'the twelve days of Christmas', what is given on the fifth day? Five ____ rings (6)
16. Intestinal absorptive cells are also known as ____ (11)
18. In the year 1915, the first Christmas ____ were introduced (5)
20. Melissa's cats name is ____ (7)
22. Where in Samoa was the SPAW team based during Libby's recent trip? (4)
23. Hills have a new diet hitting the shelves soon, named i/d low fat GI ____ Canine (7)
24. What vetspecs staff member went to India earlier in the year? (5)
25. Who was our last Vetspecs CCEV guest speaker? (4,4)
26. Acepromazine causes peripheral vaso- ____ (8)

DOWN

1. Which Vetspecs staff member spent time working in Abel Tasman National Park for project Janzsoon this year? (6)
2. Aparna is in the ____ year of her specialist residency programme (6)
3. Melissa joins our team from her home town of New ____ (8)
5. Samoa consists of two main islands. Savai'i and ____ (5)



6. SVS stands for ____ Veterinary Supplies (8)
7. SPAW stands for South Pacific Animal ____ (7)
9. Vetspecs now offers Negative Pressure ____ Therapy (5)
11. Dr Jennifer ____ was our fabulous guest speaker for the 2014 Vetspecs Road Show (6)
12. Helen spent 2.5 months with 13 sled dogs in which American state this year? (6)
14. What is the first name of the main character in A Christmas Carol? ____ Scrooge (8)
17. Libby's first patient in Samoa was a ____ (11)
19. From A Christmas Carol, who said the famous line "God bless us, everyone!"? (4, 3)
21. Jurox are the makers of which induction agent? ____ (7)

Fax, email or post your completed crossword to Vetspecs by Friday 16th of January 2015. All correct entries go into the draw to win a \$100 hamper, kindly supplied by SVS. Remember to include your name, clinic name and contact number so you can be notified. Winner will be drawn on Friday the 23rd January 2015 and put on our facebook page.



Vetspecs team

Left to right: Helen Milner (Director), Brent Higgins, Aparna Tikekar, Damian Chase, Kristina Boyd, Melissa Roberts, Lauren Keenan, Libby Leader and Philipa Burns.



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