

Island Issues

AARF Reflects On 2004

Looks Forward to 2005 *by Jackie Cestero*

As the Anguilla Animal Rescue Foundation (AARF) heads into its fourth official year as a Friendly Society, much has been accomplished by the hard working Executive Committee and Members. 2004 was a year to firm up and define our programs including animal adoption, community outreach, foster parenting, spay/neuter and a new Trap Neuter Release pilot program for feral cats. It was also a year for venturing out to meet with other organizations to learn about the ever expanding animal welfare programs abroad.

AARF's animal adoption programs, which are encouraged both locally and abroad, continue to be strong with the help of our partners Sherry and John Morrall of Puppy Angels in New Hampshire, and local pilots Roy Bossons and Bob Turner. In October and November last year AARF experienced 50 animals being surrendered as well as an unprecedented number of local adoptions including 18 in October and 9 in November. Sixteen animals, including two kittens for the first time, traveled on the "Midnight Express to the US" with

significant improvement over the 40% registered during the previous 2 years. Since December 2000, AARF has cared for over 600 animals.

Adoption programs are augmented by a foster parent component. These Volunteers take in one or more animals, provide food, shelter, love and in rare cases, medical care until they are ready to be adopted locally or sent to new homes in the U.S. Foster families usually have their own companion animals who become mentors to the little ones as they get ready for a new life. Socialization in a home setting gives the young a sense of trust and allows their personalities to develop making them more attractive for adoption. Over the last year, 12 families gave our companion animals a second chance at a new beginning.

The above programs have proven effective in dealing with the existing animal population in our island nation. However, the long term issues of reducing the number of homeless animals

are addressed thorough AARF's humane education and spay/neuter activities.

The AARF Education Committee has been working over the past 3 years with pre and primary school teachers to present humane education programs at assemblies and events. Recently, the committee expanded its activities to include community youth groups such as the Youth Soccer Club. These inter-



Einstein, one of 6 kittens and their mother fostered by Bethany and Jerry Risk from 2 weeks old.

active sessions include question and answer periods on topics related to animal care, welfare, the importance of preventative care and spaying/neutering. A presentation is made by Sarah, an AARF rescue dog pictured below and her owner, Lynn Bartlett, who describes how she came to be adopted, taught obedience commands and a few special tricks. Children and adults are always delighted with Sarah's knowledge and it is an opportunity to see for themselves the benefits of proper companion animal care and treatment.

In the Spring last year, a humane care poster contest was held at Road Primary School financed by the Kathy Melby Memorial Fund. Students were provided with the tools to create posters reflecting aspects of humane animal treatment. 23 Kindergarten and Class One children participated and their entries were judged on a humane slogan and artistic presentation. Winners, Carlan Romney, Yennifer Gumbs, Te Mani Hawley, Hasani Hennis and Rushion Phillip, were given AARF t-shirts and Carlan, the overall winner also received a copy of Joanne Mason's book, Paddy, the Goat That Saved Rainbow Island. AARF extends its appreciation to the Melby family for supporting this program and we anticipate even greater participation in the coming year.

As part of AARF's spay/neuter program, educational materials including information on diseases that affect companion animals in Anguilla (heartworm, ehrlichiosis, feline leukemia and FIV) were provided to all care givers. Information about preventive care benefits, spaying, neutering and the main points of the Dog Act 2001 were highlighted.



pilot Bob Turner in mid November. Animals like these puppies (left) are flown via private plane from Anguilla to Puerto Rico, are monitored during the day by pet sitters and at midnight fly for free on a cargo transport to the U.S. Puppy Angels picks them up

and all are featured on www.petfinder.com, a web site that allows animal shelters to post adoptable pets nationwide for free. Adoptions begin the day after arrival and in many cases the animals have American homes even before they land. Particularly with adults, heartworm and ehrlichiosis treatment is provided by Puppy Angels prior to adoption. The combination of these two alternatives gives AARF a relatively high adoption rate compared to similar organizations...78% in 2003 and 82% in 2004. This is a



Carlan, Rushion and Hasani show off their winning posters

A very large stuffed Clifford the Big Red Dog was donated to AARF this year during the HSU/HIS Animal Welfare Conference in Dallas. He attends all AARF events to remind children of the importance of treating companion animals properly. Clifford carries with him his food and water bowl, Heartgard, Frontline, shampoo, toys and all the essentials for making him a happy pet. Easy to read handouts are available to all children on the proper care of both cats and dogs. Clifford is particularly attractive to young children that are familiar with the popular series of books.

The initiatives of the 2003 spay/neuter pilot program were significantly expanded this year through funding from the Pegasus Foundation and Puppy Angels. Grants of US\$2,500 from the Pegasus Foundation and US\$3,000 from Puppy Angels with the balance of US\$6,500 coming from AARF are expected to provide surgeries for 300 animals in Anguilla.. The July 2004 3-day clinic, supported by volunteer veterinarians and technicians from Puppy Angels, provided surgeries to 134 cats and dogs. The balance of animals is currently being completed here by Morlen's Veterinary Hospital and thus far, another 135 animals have been completed bringing the surgery total to 269.

Over the past two years of running spay/neuter clinics it has become apparent that there is a significant problem with feral cat colonies in Anguilla, specifically around hotels and restaurants where food is abundant. Many people are tending to feral colonies living in the bush around private homes. Trap Neuter Release Programs (TNR) are the currently accepted standard approach for dealing with both feral cat and dog colonies. Feeding stations are set up in a convenient location away from hotel buildings and food is supplied at regular intervals for a period of at least two weeks. Once accustomed to receiving food at the feeding stations, food baited humane traps are placed at night to catch the cats. They are then transported to the vet for surgery, kept overnight and returned to their original location for release. Shoal Bay Villas was the first to participate in AARF's TNR Partnership program to help control their colony

of 10 cats and kittens. Three of the 4 youngest kittens were socialized and placed in adoptive homes in the community. The last male kitten remained with the colony but was subsequently poisoned. As of November 2004, all remaining cats were spayed/neutered and no new cats have joined the colony. Unfortunately, neighbours continue to use poisoning to rid their properties of unwanted cats. They are being approached to participate in the program to help reduce the risk to the Villa cats as well as raise awareness of TNR benefits.



Shoal Bay's Sylvester at his favourite game of hide and seek

Cap Juluca agreed to participate in September last year during their off season period. This property has at least two distinct colonies and separate feeding stations were set up to facilitate the program. Thus far three males and one female have had surgery and been returned to the property. It is expected that this will be an ongoing project until clear estimates of the colony size can be obtained.

When AARF was formed in Fall, 2000 it was clear that the island's animal welfare issues would not be corrected overnight. But with the help of many dedicated volunteers, the organization has taken many small steps toward achieving our goal of improving the quality of life for all the animals of Anguilla.

AARF's Executive Committee would like to thank the many dedicated volunteers who have helped with our programs this year, those who donated so generously through financial contributions, supplies and other items and the many care givers who brought their companion animals to our free clinics to help stop the cycle of unwanted puppies and kittens. Finally we would like to thank the media for publishing our activities throughout the year and in particular Anguilla Life Magazine for allowing us to share our stories over the last eleven issues. Without the support of so many special people AARF would not have achieved so much.

The Anguilla Animal Rescue Foundation is a non-profit all volunteer organization dedicated to the humane care and treatment of all the animals of Anguilla. Funding comes exclusively from grants, fund raising projects and donations. The Foundation receives no Government support. Their web site <http://www.aarf.ai/> shows a number of ways to help and support the Foundation. IRS Tax deductible donations may be made through the Anguilla Progressive Society of New York or the Anguilla Community Foundation. Call (264) 497-4600 Mon- Fri from 9am to 1pm. E-mail: info@aarf.ai **Jackie Cestero is the President and Promotion Coordinator of the Anguilla Animal Rescue Foundation.**



Just a few of the happy adoptees that have recently benefited from AARF programs