

Last month Australian Animal Aid returned to help the people and animals of Ukraine.

Aid

The United Nations estimates as many as 3.7 million Ukrainians initially fled the country last year and many of them are pet owners, forced to flee to bordering countries with their beloved pets without essentials such as food, medicines or apparel items.

Conflict often results in the depopulation of entire regions causing animals to be left behind. Domestic animals may be deserted without adequate access to food or water, either tied up or kept inside an abandoned building, or else left to roam the streets or run off in the process of war or their owners have been killed. Many are taken in by volunteer shelters who are overwhelmed in numbers.

The Australian War Animal Memorial Organisation Inc. (AWAMO), a registered not-for profit Incorporation is Australia's leading service animal charity. Australian Animal Aid is a subbranch of AWAMO, has viewed the crisis in Ukraine like many and decided to do something about it. Last year, AWAMO President Nigel Allsopp approached several animal businesses for assistance in helping to facilitate a delivery of more than \$500,000 of essential pet care supplies to animals impacted by the war in Ukraine. To ensure the aid got to the intended destinations two AWAMO representatives (Nigel Allsopp and Peter Kotzur) went to Ukraine to oversee the distribution of emergency food relief to the area's most in need.

Just like Australians, Ukrainian pet owners considered their dogs and cats to be well-loved members of their families. During conflicts pets can provide emotional comfort, in some instances, these dogs and cats were the only things that provided the victims of the war with a sense of purpose and hope. A recent study shows that rather than flee from the Russian invaders, 39% of Ukrainian families stayed in Kyiv, in part because of their pets. Much needed basic care products throughout the country are still in need. Impacting on the efforts by many volunteer animal shelters caring for the animals of Ukraine.

One dilemma about rescuing stray animals in the combat regions is by removing them to safety, there will be little chance in finding their owners once they return. However, do you leave them in those areas or remove them to safety and guaranteed food and shelter? Abandoned animals perpetuate stray populations and are vulnerable to outbreaks of diseases and once the conflict has ended, animals who were once healthy are likely to have post-traumatic stress disorder or physical ailments that decrease the likelihood of adoption. To help reunite these animals is to be able to identify them.

This is why are recent deployment in September 2023 AAA focused on the introduction of a microchip program, the training of animal first aid and the support of a couple of animal shelters (sadly we can only focus on a few).

So, in September this year Australian Animal Aid once more travelled to Ukraine to assist local NGOs

Microchip in Ukraine Project

One of the main focuses in this second deployment to Ukraine was to implement a country wide universal microchip program for all animals. Ukraine does have an existing identification program run in part by the State. This includes microchips and an ear tag system in small numbers. This system lacks commonality with the rest of Europe. This later point is noteworthy as many pets were taken across Polish and other borders by Ukraine refugees.

Working alongside Ukraine animal charities- None Government Organisations (NGO) the Armed forces and Lviv University, Australian Animal Aid conducted over several days, lectures to over 60 students on its implementation and advantages to Veterinary Students.



A meeting with Vadyn Chaikovskyi Deputy Head State Chief State Phytosanitary Inspector of Ukraine was arranged and I travelled to Kyiv on the overnight train. At the meeting I explained how Microchips Australia has kindly donated systems and materials to implement a world leading animal identification program to Ukraine.

The Army and Border Forces advise me that they are aware of another local system including some tattooing and ear collars. The latter tends to fall out or can be removed. The Border Force has taken 100 microchips already for immediate use.

Australian veterinarian Dr Lauchlan Campbell is currently in Ukraine implanting 500 microchips in the Southern Region of Ukraine, whilst conducting stray dog neutering project for another NGO.

I must mention Doug Black CEO of Microchips Australia and his team not just for his generosity and compassion for animals and the plight of Ukraine, but he has developed a new computerised system specially for Ukraine. Plus, great assistance from Nowzad Ukraine CEO Liuba Mocharska. The benefits of having animals that can be traced and their owner, once again able to locate them after the war, will be a massive boost to people's morale. I guess if ever you have lost a pet, you understand the relief when it is found, add the trauma of war and a forced separation to get some idea of how important this project is.

Both the Deputy Minister and Lviv University Veterinary department were most interested regarding applications in the Fish and Agricultural fields. It can be used also for wildlife and zoo management. This microchipping can also be an aid in Law Enforcement and anti-smuggling or poaching operations.

Why is this project so important:

Generally, attachment to pets is high, with many people considering pets as members of the family. The strength of this attachment is never more apparent than in the event of pet loss in disaster, with reports of prolonged and often unnoticed or unsupported grief and poor psychological outcomes, especially in the event of forced abandonment of pets during evacuation. The roles pets and other animals may play in supporting post-emergency functioning and resilience-building are also vital. For these reasons, microchipping is an essential part of disaster management planning.



Microchip will be used by Ukraine Border Forces

As part of the future development to improve Ukraine's animal identification system, the Ukraine border Force received an initial batch of 100 Microchips plus implanting and a reader donated by Microchips Australia. <u>https://microchips.com.au/</u>

CERTIFICATE of ACHIEVEMENT
Presented to
This is to certify that the above named person has successfully completed a course in Basic First Aid Care. Restraint and Manipulation & the Administration of Medicines.
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After completing the course all participates received a certificate.

It is hoped that this project will enhance and supplement the ways displaced animals can be reunited and identified in this war tore country.

When such a catastrophic event overwhelms a community, the first instinct for many is to grab their loved ones and head to safety. Many people cannot likewise imagine leaving their animals behind but haven't included the necessary preparations in their own emergency plans.

Planning for animals in the response and recovery phases of disasters is crucial to mitigate the negative effects that the loss or separation of animals can have. The human-animal bond can influence people's decisions during emergencies including how they will respond and when or if they evacuate.

Most people will want to take their pets with them during a major evacuation. However, there may be circumstances were this is not practical. In this case microchipped pets have a chance to be found and reunited with their family.

AWAMO staff work with a Ukraine NGO Nozwad who have a warehouse in Lviv, Ukraine. It is run by CEO Liuba Mocharska. an amazing lady and her son Vol, both qualified Veterinarians. How they operate is Lviv acts as the distribution and collection centre. When requests for assistance come in, then they transport aid to the front. At the front lines several volunteers that live and remain locally then pick up the food aid transferring it into smaller cars so as not to drawn attention and distribute food on the streets in tube feeders like AWAMO supplied. The other Ukraine NGO we work alongside is Pet Friendly. They specialize on improving the dog sanctuary we support and training & educating civilians in first aid and animal related issues.

Animal Shelter



One of the first places we visited was a dog sanctuary some 40 kilometres out of Lviv. A place of refuge for many dogs that have been transported from the front lines to this relative safety. Alas it was built for around 50 dogs it has around 500 at present. The staff all volunteers are doing an amazing job but simply overwhelmed. It is awash in mud many of the dogs remain dirty as there was no clean water, but they are all well fed, thanks to the owners' sacrifices.

I first came here last year and wanted to help. We sent them fiscal aid to buy food at the time. But that was a temporary fix, what is needed is support of the infrastructure namely building new kennelling, better electricity supply and fresh water.

As last time when I entered the compound, I was swamped by dogs all trying their best to say in their own way- pick me take me home. It's been a while since I had a tear in my eye. One dog however took my eye- it was Boris. Boris a pure-bred German short haired pointer had been there in the same cage 12 months ago when I first visited. I have decided to try and bring him home to Australia. Yes, we have plenty of dogs in need of a home in Australia, but I feel his repatriation to Australia will send a good message that the animal plight is not forgotten by Australian animal lovers.

Apart from food with winter encroaching in Ukraine they need better shelter and food storage areas. AWAMO has in its shipment various winter coats for dogs as well as dog bowls and collars, leads and blankets. These have been donated by the Women's Auxiliary RSA, in New Zealand. These will help in the coming cold months. This is just one of many shelters that need help.

What do they need?



They need apart from food, free veterinary assistance and medication for such things as flea and worm treatment. But most importantly they require basic necessities such as clean water, food and shelter. Pet Friendly a Ukraine NGO whom Australian Animal Aid has a partnership with has made the first leap in providing a new well that pumps fresh clean water to the shelter. This is a vital improvement from the state of the water that the previous rusty old well produced. The next phase AAA has provided funds for is the pipping of this water underground to the kennel area. At present a volunteer must carry buckets of water to each kennel a very labour-intensive task. Structures such as a food preparation area is needed due to a large rodent problem, and we hope to help fund this too.

Electricity supply is rudimentary, that is when it does work. We have a generator for them on the shipment and several outdoor gas heaters.

All the dog food is cooked on a labour-intensive old wood fired oven. To feed all the dogs it must run all day, billowing smoke inside a shed, itself barely standing, as it is so old. This is another project to replace this building and stove. A better electric cooker will enhance the process. But as stated the electric power is unreliable. I believe the answer may lay in solar power for the sanctuary.

New kennels are slowly being built to replace ad hoc structures; these will improve the quality of life for these confined dogs. The existing kennels all have dirt floors whereas the new will have cleanable flooring.



One issue in Ukraine is there are no formal government regulations when it comes to breeders or kennel owners or sanctuaries such as this. In Australia a council would likely shut this operation down from hygiene to OH&S issues, but that is not an option here, as it's all they have, to help the dogs of Lviv.

The Staff and volunteers do an amazing job here, they work under adverse conditions, holding day jobs to support the dog sanctuary. There is no council or government support.



Old kennels and the new improved version. Regardless however of the updated kennelling space is still an issue with dozens of dogs having to share an area that is ideal for only one dog. Dogs also live in an abandoned double story house on the property, not ideal but shelter from the elements.



The kitchen food preparation building is dark and smoky, it is manned almost all day by the sanctuary owners' elderly father.

First Aid Training



One of the AWAMO team Alan Watson ex- NZDF dog handler and trainer demonstrates the art of applying a bandage to an injured paw. One of several common injuries caused in war especially in the aftermath of debris from bombed buildings.

One of the first training sessions we conducted was at the Lviv Veterinary University, students were in their third year of training and where very receptive to advanced emergency canine first aid principals.

You might wonder why a few Australians volunteered to teach K9 first aid in Ukraine, well regardless of the students being trainee vets, specialist areas such this are in demand. Both professionals and civilian who work with or have pet dogs in Ukraine may benefit from these emergency procedures. Due to random shelling and drone attacks many pets are injured. This course enables pet owners as well as professionals to render first aid until professional veterinary assistance can be given.

Techniques taught apart from basic health and administration of medications, included K9 CPR, bandaging, blast wounds, shock management including application of drips, gun wounds and other trauma related injuries common in a war zone. The students benefitted by learning from the operational experiences of my team. Namely with more than 70 years of combined professional full time military or police dog handling experience between the three team members.



An amazing University it has been training students in veterinary science for hundreds of years in one form or another. It is amazing coming from Australia where are history is merely a blink in the eye compared to Europe, this university was established in 1789. The current university facility was built during Soviet occupation times, but new structures and facilities are being added. We had a meeting with the university Rector Professor Ivan Parubchak.





Same lecture as at the University – same day this time at night for local civilian search and rescue workers and military Border Force staff. I must acknowledge Alan and Barrie put in massive hours training people, conducting training sessions during the day and evenings.





After completing the two-hour course, students were awarded a certificate of completion and a small clip-on Kola!

Please view the video links below:

https://www.facebook.com/pet.friendly.ngo/videos/618023020405750 https://www.facebook.com/pet.friendly.ngo/videos/1009156117025690



Promotional- poster at university and various conference centres where the team conducted advance emergency K9 first aid training to both civilian pet owners and university veterinary students to government canine units from civil defence to armed forces.



CPR K9 manakin and training items left behind.

We left behind many friends both new and old from this and our previous deployment to Ukraine last year, when Australia Animal Aid was the first Australian charity to support the Ukraine crises after the Russian invasion. We also left behind animal first aid training materials for local NGOs to continue what we had started.

These items included life like canine CPR manakin, a life size training dog used to practice bandaging and restraint techniques, plus training manuals and PowerPoint presentations to conduct future K9 first aid training. Further instruction was given to selected staff from a local NGO Pet-Friendly to enable them to be instructors and continue the training with implemented.

Training was given to several government organisations including the Border Force and the military and civilian organisations such as Search & Rescue, plus private citizens interested in protecting their own pets in case of Russian drone attack which sadly happens. Further training was given at the Lviv University to year three Veterinarian students.

Australia Animal Aid decided to leave the CPR manikin with the Border Force as they have a training school in which it will be used to train new handlers.



President of AWAMO Nigel Allsopp with CEO Ukraine Nowzad charity, presents Officers from the Border Force with the CPR manakin.



Australian Animal Aid instructor Alan Watson trains the Border Force future instructors on K9 CPR one last time prior to the handover. Australia Animal Aid has committed to provide more CPR manikins to the army, and Lviv University veterinarian training school.



War dog medal presentation. Honouring Ukraine's war and service animals.

Right: ALMAS with his handler, ALMAS is a 3-year-old male, Ukraine bred Belgian Shepherd. The Medallion around his neck. Left: Nigel Allsopp is thanked by Almas upon receiving his Medallion for bravery.

As part of the Australian War Animal Memorial Organization (AWAMO)- The Australian Animal Aid (AAA) team in Ukraine were invited to the Special Operations dog section in Kyiv. The Australian team members have been training border Force and Army canine teams in advanced combat K9 First Aid, as well as exchanging knowledge in Mine and Explosive detection techniques.

Australian Animal Aid (AAA) has also donated numerous operational leads, harnesses, collars and kennelling to front line Military Working Dogs.

This is the second time Australian Animal Aid has deployed to Ukraine. The first time being last years at the outbreak of hostilities. On this occasion the charity provided a shipping container of animal medication and food supplies to the people of Ukraine.

On this second deployment AWAMO President Nigel Allsopp MA (RSL ANZAC of the year 2017) and representative of UK Blue Cross Awards contacted Australia's major animal associations where it was decided to award a unique Australian war animal medallion to Ukraine. This medallion was first issued to the Ukraine Ambassador in Canberra who arranged for it to be awarded when Australian Animal Aid was in Ukraine to the Colonel in charge of the Army dog unit.

In a ceremony in a forest not far from the dog unit's location in Kyiv, the Australian Award was handed to ALMAS (which means diamond) and his handler, along with the medallion was a certificate of recognition for the brave work ALMAS has done during the war. They



have located more than 800 mines in the recaptured area of Northern Kyiv left by Russian troops. A hero of the Ukraine indeed.

Handler and Almas with the Commander of the unit A1333, Colonel Lyniov, President AWAMO Nigel Allsopp, Ministry of Defence interpreter Anatoliy Zaritsky and Australian Journalist Julian Knysh.



It was not just a one-way ceremony, to my surprise and great honour I was awarded a certificate from the Ukraine Army for all the assistance AWAMO has given in both materials and information.

On behalf of the Australian people after support of major animal associations I presented a bronze medal to honour, not only this dog for its personal achievements, but to represent the deeds and sacrifices of all the service dogs of Ukraine.

The following animal and bravery associations in Australia support and recognise these deeds and sacrifices that animals have endured in conflict.



Nigel Allsopp | *President* Australian War Animal Memorial Organisation



Andrew Kendall *National President* Australian Bravery Association



Ray Thomas President

Royal Australian Air Force Dog Handlers Association



Lawrence Watts National President The Australian Light Horse Association



Greg <u>Kakoschke</u>

Chairman Australian National Racing Pigeon Board



Sean Baxendell

Operations Leader / Officer in Charge QPS Dog Section



Major Kendall Crocker ADF Veterinarian

Australian Veterinary Association



Presentation of bronze plaque

Similar to the initial presentation of the animal bravery medal presented to the Ukraine Ambassador Vasyl Myroshnychenko last year, AWAMO staff also presented a bronze plaque to honour all the service animals caught up in the conflict. The Australian Ambassador passed on the plaque to the Defence Department in Ukraine. As I was in Kyiv it was arranged by the Military Attaché I had also met in Canberra and was now himself back in Kyiv to officially hand over the plaque to the Army.



Ukraine Army Colonel from unit A1333- a special K9 unit MOD Interpreter and Australian Military Attaché at presentation, also attended by numerous civilian and military staff, were presented with the bronze plaque whilst in return AWAMO received an engraved plate to honour the day.



2017 ANZAC of the year Nigel Allsopp in Ukraine

When I was in Kyiv, I laid a flag in the remembrance garden. I wrote a simple message "For the ANZACs".

As an ex-NZDF and ADF member and 2017 ANZAC of the year it was an emotional sight to see New Zealand and Australian flags miles from home. They were surrounded by a sea of Ukraine flags- their brothers in arms.

I was in Ukraine for a second time with the Australian charity, Australian Animal Aid (AAA), a sub – branch of the Australian War Animal Memorial Organization (AWAMO).

Australian Animal Aid shipped over a container of animal aid from collars and leads, coats for the coming winter for dogs and horses, Gas heaters, generators, feeding stations, dog and cat cages, medication, dog portable kennels, blankets and food. Also, what I was in Kyiv for, a supply of military grade camouflage dog leads, harnesses booties, collars and vital K9 medical supplies they needed. Delivered directly to an operational front-line dog mine detection unit.

The shipment also included behavioural enrichment articles for Zoos we supported last deployment, having then purchased the large generators to keep food fresh during blackouts caused by Russian deliberately targeting infrastructure.



Among a sea of Ukraine flags flies a lone Australian flag. A reminder this war concerns the whole world and many people from around the world including Australia and New Zealand have given their lives for a cause they believed in.



Outside parliament in Kyiv awaiting to visit the Deputy Head State services of Ukraine. In company with my escorts a military colonel Igon and our Interpreter Julian. It is easy to forget that the Russian forces came within several kilometres of the capital. Civilians, but mainly the reserves and territorial army held and fought them back. They remain relatively near as missile warnings are still frequent events. Even getting me out of bed on several occasions.

Feeding Tubes



Various food stations were set up by local volunteers at the front or in devastated regions were both displaced cats and dogs' roam. These devices can be filled weekly with either dog food or water. A volunteer only required thus to expose themselves to danger once a week. Thus, a wide area can be covered by multiple feeders. It does not take the local dogs to find them, work out how to feed from them. Some days they have been seen to line up patiently awaiting their turn. The Australian Animal Aid feeders were donated by Bunnings and covered in artwork from school children. The first four feeders have been named after AWAMO friends.

These feed stations will be maintained by two Ukraine None-Government Organizations (NGO) in which we will be forever grateful. The are Nowzat and Pet Friendly.

Dr Harry Cooper

An amazing Australian icon and friend of mine, Harry has been inspirational to me over many decades with his work and compassion for animals. This small gesture of having one of our feed stations named after him ensures Harry is and will continue to help the displaced animals of Ukraine.

Glenda Atkins

Sadly, Glenda passed away recently she was an AWAMO Director alongside her husband Bob Atkinson Queensland Commissioner of Police (Rtd.) whom is AWAMOs joint Patron. Glenda was a passionate animal activist for animals. She had a love of dogs and Glenda was also the Patron of the Queensland Police dog section.

Palm Shelton

Palm alongside her Club the Diggers Services Club in Logan have been supporters of AWAMO for over a decade. Pam was a Director and Treasurer, sadly Palm passed away recently. She loved all animals but perhaps cats where her favourite. This small but significant gesture of a feeding station I think she would approve. In the background but doing an important job, just like she did for me in AWAMO. I could always have a chat with Palm and ask her opinion and you always got a straight forthright answer.

Dr Paul Henry

I knew Paul when I was a Police dog handler over many years, he treated mine and hundreds of police and Royal Australian Air Force dogs over decades. Paul helped me write a book on K9 First Aid which a decade later is still used training Ukraine military and civilian students, as we did this deployment.



Watch this YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0PC7BpfTSs





We reunited with many friends from the last deployment and made new friends on this one. The people from our NGO that we work with are more than friends they are family. A special thankyou to our interpreters who made organizing meetings and training run smoothly.

The main reasons of this deployment were initially two-fold. Firstly, to introduce a microchip program to Ukraine to help identify displaced animals. The second important mission we had been requested to do from our last deployment was to instruct civilians in pet first aid. Due to random drone strikes places not near the front lines (If there is really such a thing nowadays) causing injury and death to civilians and on occasions their pets. At the same time both the Army Search & Rescue and Border Forces dog sections requested the same training. All three of us having been Military dog handlers, this was a pleasure to help our fellow doggies.







The Training Team

This deployment could not have taken place without my long-time friends Alan Watson and Barrie Gerbich who brought years of experience in canine training expertise and a sense of humour supporting me while I ran around organizing ten things at once.

Alan Watson:

Ex NZDF dog handler, including dog trainer of Military working dogs and specialist detection dogs. Alan has also served in the ADF and law enforcement. Alan has academic qualifications in Animal psychology and a K9 First aid technician.

Barry Gerbich:

Ex NZDF and law enforcement dog handler. 30 years professional dog handling and instructing for NZ and Australian government departments (Both General Purpose and Detector Dog). 10yrs professional instructing and consulting for multi-national companies in mining and oil industries. Dog Master African Barrick Gold Tanzania. Dog recruitment from Czech Republic. Develop and implement training programs and standard operational procedures. Security Superintendent - GRML Solomon Islands. Develop and implement training programs and standard operational procedures. Dog Consultant PNG Mobil Esso Highlands Project. Australia Day Achievement Medallion Training of Dog Squad-Queensland Corrections. 1st Place National Detector Dog Championships New Zealand. Excellence Award for Dog Operations- Queensland Corrections. Author 'Manage Dogs for Security' and 'Manage Security Dog patrol' for RTO Brisbane (accepted by AFQA) as part of security dog licence requirements. University Degree in dog behaviour & health and husbandry. **Nigel Allsopp:**

Over 40 years of animal related experience. Ex: NZDF and ADF. Dog Master RNZAF, Qld Police Service explosive detection dog handler, wildlife Ranger, Zookeeper. Internationally recognised subject matter expert on war animals. Author 15 published books on animals including one on K9 First Aid.

What to do next

After consultation with local Ukraine charities and officials it seems a very practical way for Australians to help is by helping fund improvements for animal shelters, but number one priority is the establish a mobile clinic to treat dogs and cats.

So, the campaign starts again to raise funds for a vehicle and help to establish a free mobile clinic to treat animals.

Animal Ambulance Concept



Using an Animal Ambulance would result in both a transportation requirement and a hygienic and professional facility to conduct emergent operations or local temporary clinics. There is also a third role an Animal Ambulance can be utilised for and that is as a mobile spay/ neuter surgery. This is a growing concern in Ukraine as all these displaced animals are breeding. Without a future neutering programme this naturally will exacerbates the problem of feeding the already starving displaced animal population.

The Aim

The aim is to seek the donation of two vehicles suitable to carry two persons and a small rear mounted veterinary facility. This being similar in concept and size to a human Ambulance.

This vehicle will then be equipped with veterinary furniture to facilitate small scale operations in-situ. Plus having a capability of transporting/ evacuating animals from hostile environments.

Deployment

The vehicles will be operated from Lviv by two charities Nowzad and Pet Friendly with who we have worked with in Ukraine before. We hope to train local vets for long term operations. This ambulance is a long-term investment. Post the current war it will be required for up to a decade after hostilities end.

Concept

Yes, this system has been proven to work not only in Australia (in outback indigenous communities) but previously in combat zones such as Afghanistan. It is the right solution for the current and immediate future animal welfare needs of Ukraine's displaced pets. A New Zealand charity has already delivered seven ex- Ambulances from that country to Ukraine for Human use. Thus, the need to send vehicles from Australia, there are no spare ambulances in Ukraine for animal consideration.

Accountability for investment

Firstly, the concept and need has been identified and accessed by Australian animal experts in the field whilst operating in Ukraine and local animal charities in that country. The vehicle would be designed by AWAMO in cooperation with veterinary surgeons. It would be operated in-situ by local Ukrainian staff. The vehicle will be marked with the donators graphics as specified by them. They will receive international media and public relations exposure.

Design

Interior to have storage area for veterinary equipment. Room for a small stainless steel operating table Water supply/small sink Air conditioning unit. Fitted for power and lights. An attached recovery room.



We already have for the Ambulance in our shipment:

- Portable generator, portable fuel jerry can, generator electric extension cord 30 m.
- 10 Man hospital tent with pull down shade blinds for resting animals.
- Suitable portable animal cages for post- operation.
- Gas Heaters
- Veterinary equipment/instruments
- Portable small fridge.
- Portable lights.

Nigel Barry Allsopp

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