

# EMS in India

## A Monsoon Summer 2010.

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After finishing fourth year, my housemate and fellow vet student, Rachel Wyllie and I took the opportunity to do something a bit different with some of our EMS and contacted Help in Suffering (HIS) in Jaipur, India to spend a month seeing practice with them.



HIS is a suburban veterinary and animal welfare charity that Liverpool University Veterinary Society (LUVS) has supported for a number of years, and from previous visiting vets and students, has a fantastic reputation for professionalism, commitment and friendliness.

Our time at HIS was divided between different areas of the charity. At the dispensary we would see locals' pets, which brought a new surprise every day. One day it would be a poverty-stricken family's street dog with an open fracture and the next the Maharaja's brother Finnish Spitz with fuming a pyometra. Many of the cases seen at the dispensary would present with the same complaints and conditions as UK pets, and then there would be the occasional exotic disease such as leishmania, which seemed to be almost endemic in Jaipur.



We often attended rescues with staff which could be the collection of anything from pigeons to turtles or monkeys to buffalo. There were lots of opportunities to examine and treat bovines, equines, caprines and camelids when they were brought to the shelter, which was a great learning experience. When clinical work was quiet we would go out catching and releasing dogs on the streets in an ambulance like the one pictured above. These dogs were caught for the Animal Birth Control (ABC) program, which is the project we were most involved in during our time at HIS.

The ABC program is headed by English vet Jack Reece, who is an inspiration for all of the staff at HIS, who admire him greatly. On average 15 dogs/bitches are caught, rabies vaccinated and sterilised daily between two amazingly skilled surgeons. They receive analgesia and aftercare, and 3 days later are released back to the street where they were caught.

The vets and assistants kindly gave up huge amounts of their time to assist Rachel and myself during surgery, to teach us their technique for the flank speying of bitches and castration of dogs. Their newest addition to the team was a new graduate Indian vet, Dr. Mukesh (assisting me in the image above), who, when timed speyed a bitch in 4 minutes 4 seconds and even then I could not fault his technique, tissue handling or skill.



Working with the staff at HIS was so rewarding, they work so hard and are so committed. Severe mange is seen on a daily basis yet many of the staff were unaware of what mange actually was. Rachel and I isolated sarcoptes and demodex mites from a few dogs and the opportunity for the staff to come and look down the microscope to see a mite caused a mass movement of people into the little lab room (image above). I guess the teaching sort of worked both ways!

When you tell people you've been to a third world country for EMS they paint a picture of poor facilities, a lack of hygiene, terrifying exotic diseases and sterilisation at the road-side however this couldn't be further from the truth; India is rapidly developing. The facilities and professionalism at the shelter is inspiring, hygiene is as good as it can be and all operations are performed in the safety of a theatre!



After four weeks and over 50 sterilisations each, we have gained excellent surgical experience and invaluable confidence. I am so grateful to the ABC staff at HIS for their excellent teaching and endless patience. Any vet student who has the opportunity to see-practice overseas should do it; it was the experience of a life-time!

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