2011 was such a rewarding year for AMRRIC. We secured significant new funding, our hardworking team and programs expanded, through Bayer we have new marketing and communication resources, and a new-look website under development.

We have been overwhelmed by supporters actively fundraising on our behalf, and extend warm thanks to all our donors and fundraising friends.

We are proud to have developed a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). It is now undergoing peer review, with a formal launch planned for May 2012.

AMRRIC’s work is increasingly recognised and supported by politicians and bureaucrats from all levels of government. In late 2011, I met with federal Minister for Indigenous Health Warren Snowdon, NT Minister for Local Government Malandirri McCarthy, Senator Nigel Scullion, NT Shadow Minister for Local Government Willem Westra Van Holthe MLA, and Olga Havnen, NT Director Regional and Remote Services.

We’re looking forward to the challenges of 2012, and from all our team – best wishes for a happy, healthy and satisfying New Year.

Julia Hardaker
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Shires grasp ABA opportunity

Since signing the Aboriginals Benefit Account project agreement with East Arnhem Shire in October, Project Manager Dr John Skuja has criss-crossed the Northern Territory, establishing relationships with staff and other stakeholders in East Arnhem and two other participating Shires, Barkly and Roper Gulf.

A key part of the project is the employment of Animal Management Workers (AMWs) within these Shires. The 10 funded positions provide a tremendous opportunity for participating community members to secure full time work on AMRRIC’s project.

In East Arnhem, John visited Galiwin’ku, Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island. He worked with Shire veterinarian Dr Malcolm McGrath and Regional Animal Control Manager Brian Radovic.

In Ali Curung, Nathaniel Long and Ashley Hayes impressed everyone as they learnt skills in preparing animals and equipment for surgery, treated dogs for parasites, talked with community members about dog health and population management, and collected dogs for desexing across the community.

Barkly Shire participating communities include Ali Curung and Ampilatwatja and their outstations. Regional Animal Control Manager Brian Radovic and Shire veterinarian Dr Malcolm McGrath worked with John to engage with potential AMWs and provide an overview of the animal health issues confronting the communities. Ali Curung is particularly significant as it is Dog Dreaming country.

John’s next focus will be the third Shire to sign on to the ABA project, Roper Gulf. This will see involvement of Ngukurr and Beswick, all the communities along the Roper and Central Arnhem Highways and the potential employment of 2 Animal Management Workers.
WANTED! A volunteer to catalogue photographs. The project can be undertaken at your pace and your place. Call Julia Hardaker on 0428 485 436.

2011 Conference proceedings are now available on the AMRRIC website. Positive feedback has been received on the usability and content of the presentation videos and corresponding power points, including from AMRRIC member Dr Rosalie Schultz: “the Conference website is fantastic, the sessions on the internet easy to access, clear ... and easy to plan (time)”. 


Introducing Dr John Skuja

AMRRIC’s latest recruit, Dr John Skuja, has been appointed Project Manager of the three year $2.89 million sustainable animal management program funded by the NT Aboriginals Benefit Account – one of AMRRIC’s most comprehensive projects to date.

A University of Sydney Bachelor of Veterinary Science graduate, John initially followed a typical pathway into suburban veterinary practice. He found it “interesting but not entirely satisfying” and looked for other ways to use his degree.

John was attracted to the intensity and consequence of veterinary emergency work and also became involved with veterinary-based community development programs overseas. He worked with Vets Beyond Borders, becoming a board member.

John says working with AMRRIC is the “fulfilment of a long held dream to be living in the remote North of the country and working with Indigenous communities”.

NEWS

Croker and South Goulburn Islands

far left: Dr Judith Mulholland, pictured here with vet nurse Cathie McAdie, has delivered dog health programs on South Goulburn and Croker Islands for the past 5 years.

left: Overpopulation and poor condition of resident horses was one of the animal welfare issues addressed by Dr Mulholland during her visit to the Warruwi community on South Goulburn Island.

AMRRIC administration officer Eileen Fletcher joined AMRRIC member and volunteer veterinarian Dr Judith Mulholland and vet nurse Cathie McAdie on one of their biannual dog health visits to the Warruwi and Minjilang communities on South Goulburn and Croker Islands, north east of Darwin.

The team desexed 21 dogs and 1 cat, treated numerous dogs for parasites (and the school goat), and provided other veterinary services as required. Heather Vokis, West Arnhem Shire Council Training Manager, played a key community liaison role at Warruwi.

Eileen, who holds a Certificate IV in Companion Animal Training, led enthusiastic Warruwi school students and their dogs in a training session after school. The children learnt techniques for staying safe around aggressive dogs, how to examine their pets for health problems, and how to teach simple obedience tricks using food treats. The best performer, a small camp dog called Trixie, won an AMRRIC collar – a great encouragement to her young owner.

Dr Mulholland also discussed the welfare of resident horses on Warruwi at a community meeting. Overpopulation and lack of feed means many of the horses are in poor condition, and with no permanent water supply, they create problems in the dry season digging up town pipes and breaking down fences in search of water. The Council has agreed to maintain a water trough on the outskirts of the community, and community members acknowledge the need to address horse welfare.

At Minjilang the Principal of Mamaruni School, Fiona Spiers, invited Eileen and Jude to talk to senior students about training, staying safe around dogs and how to avoid being bitten by “cheeky” dogs. The students’ knowledge was excellent – they had already studied the AMRRIC website and video and had a good understanding of the 4 basic needs for healthy and happy dogs – good food, clean water, a place to sleep and companionship.

Dr Mulholland has been visiting both islands for 5 years, and her promotion of dog health and welfare at local schools, along with desexing and animal health programs, has already contributed significantly to the improvement in animal health on the islands.
Animal health on Kakadu Outstations is set to improve following the awarding to AMRRIC of a 2011-2012 environmental grant from the NT Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport.

Supported by the Warnbi Aboriginal Corporation, AMRRIC Program Manager Dr Jan Allen made an initial visit in December to the main inhabited outstations of Kakadu – Kapalga, Spring Peak, Patonga Homestead, Patonga Airstrip, Whistle Duck and Mudginberri.

Jan visited each household, discussing dog issues and explaining the services to be offered – desexing, parasite treatment and euthanasia (on request).

Residents are concerned about the overpopulation of dogs (many of indeterminate ownership), cheeky dogs, diseases such as mange, and malnourished lactating bitches killing wildlife to feed their pups. Four dogs had died the previous week at Kapalga of tick infestation. An estimated 100-plus dogs will require desexing, but this will vary according to the season and the movement of dogs and their owners.

The initial visit led to a proposal of 2 visits of 3 days each, at the start and end of the Dry season. AMRRIC will facilitate a veterinary health and desexing program where the work of the principal veterinarian will be enhanced by volunteer vets and nurses. Warnbi Aboriginal Corporation will provide the all-important liaison person, a suitable vehicle, and surgery sites in communities that have power, water, shelter and basic surgery tables.

AMRRIC collaborated with NT Power and Water to deliver dog awareness training to Essential Services Officers (ESOs) at the organisation’s annual Safety and Wellness Expo held in Darwin last October.

ESOs live and work in remote communities across the NT, and are frequently confronted by aggressive dogs when managing their community’s power, water and sewerage services. Administration Officer Eileen Fletcher’s professional animal training qualifications are in high demand from AMRRIC stakeholders. Eileen led the ESO training sessions with Education Officer Sophie Constable. They focused on helping ESOs learn techniques to help them stay safe on the job: teaching how to read canine body language and understand dogs’ motivations, how to recognise and minimise an attack, and how to prevent serious injury. The seminars included information about diseases carried by dogs that can impact on human health.

Eileen worked with 3 dogs to deliver an interactive and practical session, and the ESOs received an AMRRIC DVD and information kit. Power and Water training specialist Joanne Noske said the feedback was “fantastic”.

AMRRIC staff have enormous experience and expertise and are available to deliver tailored training seminars to government, corporate and non-government organisations – email Eileen Fletcher on eileen@amrric.org or phone (08) 8948 1768.

AMRRIC will work with Parks to provide an education program at the school prior to the visits. This helps to engage the community and give them a good understanding of animal health programs.

Bagot Day attracts ABC coverage

Darwin City Council, the Ark Animal Hospital and AMRRIC collaborated in a dog (and cat) desexing and registration day at Darwin’s Bagot town camp. Dr Stephen Cutter, principal of Ark Animal Hospital, AMRRIC Board member and one of the most experienced veterinarians working in remote communities, joined AMRRIC’s Dr Jan Allen in a day of surgery and registration.

Sixteen animals were desexed and many more microchipped and registered. While the Bagot camp dogs are healthy, the community recognises dog overpopulation is creating severe problems for humans and animals. Darwin City Council plans similar days at other town camps in 2012.

ABC TV 7.30 Report reported dog issues in remote communities from a variety of viewpoints. See: http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-12-03/dog-fight/3710614

above: Severely malnourished and mange-afflicted feral dog at Jabiru tip. Image Peter Fleming.

above: Administration Officer Eileen Fletcher – with the help of Fender, Buddy and Blue – delivering dog awareness training to NT Power and Water staff.
Help us fund dog collars
We need $5,000 to support our dog collar program!
One of the ways AMRRIC rewards community members who bring their dog in for desexing is to send each dog home with a brand new collar. It’s a simple but effective way to acknowledge responsible pet ownership and identify desexed dogs in each community.
If you are interested in helping us with our dog collar program, please contact AMRRIC on (08) 8948 1768 or info@amrric.org.

Farrier Vet fundraiser
Not only does Dr Judith Mulholland make the most extraordinary contribution to animal health and community education in remote communities as one of AMRRIC’s member veterinarians (see page 2), her entire veterinary staff support AMRRIC.
Jude is principal of Farrier Vet in Kyabram, Victoria and on Melbourne Cup Day she and her team held a Doggie Cup to raise funds for AMRRIC. Held at the same time as the Horsie Cup, it incorporated all the fun of Fashion on the Field and Parade of the Champions.
Jude’s work with AMRRIC takes place alongside running a very busy equine veterinary practice and farrier business, and we are enormously grateful for her fundraising support. Donations make a huge difference to the work we can undertake.

Animal health starts at school
Improving animal health and welfare is not just about desexing dogs. A significant focus for AMRRIC, through Education Officer Dr Sophie Constable, is the education of school students.
In late 2011 Sophie undertook her third visit to Amata and Mimili in SA’s Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands.
In Amata, community leader Allan Wilson had already recorded 7 stories in Pitjanjatjara and English for the Amata Talking Dog Book. At Mimili, Maku Arts artists Dapi and Margaret Umula and Willie Martin are keen to collaborate with the school on a Pitjanjatjara Talking Book in 2012.
Sophie spent a week at Mimili School conducting dog health workshops. Preschool and junior primary students completed bilingual Pitjanjatjara/English activities, and older primary students were taught about dogs’ needs (good food, clean water, a safe place to sleep, family, tick baths, medicine, exercise, company) and how to recognise dogs’ feelings. All students learn about diseases shared by people and dogs, and used an agar plate experiment to show where bacteria can be found within their school.

AMRRIC Resources
AMRRIC T shirts ($35) and polos ($45), featuring a Cheeky Dog design, are available in sand and black (plus $7 postage). Email: info@amrric.org

Join AMRRIC
Membership not only provides critical support to AMRRIC, members receive full access to AMRRIC website resources, including Dr Samantha Phelan’s “Conducting Dog Health Programs in Indigenous Communities - A Veterinary Guide”.
If you would like to become a member, please complete an online membership form and post it, along with the fee, to AMRRIC, PO Box 1464, Nightcliff, NT 0810. Download at: http://www.amrric.org/membershipform.pdf

? HOW YOU CAN HELP
Every contribution from our donors and supporters helps make sustainable dog management a reality in remote communities across Australia.
Donations to AMRRIC are tax deductible and it’s easy to become a regular monthly donor. To donate, visit our website at www.amrric.org or call us on (08) 8948 1768.