

Darwin Animal Doctors

Annual Report 2016

We believe animals all over the world should have access to veterinary care and that biodiversity is worth saving.

In 2016, we helped more animals than ever and brought our mission to save animals and biodiversity beyond the Galapagos.





Veterinary Care

At the Darwin Animal Doctors (Darwin) full-time clinic in the precious UNESCO World Heritage Site, we believe that by creating a model to save animals and ecosystem of a place of global significance, we can use this as a model for saving animals around the world. Through free veterinary care to domestic animals and wildlife, disease treatment and prevention, research and education, we are changing the future of animals for good.

Saving Animals:

In 2016, we treated 3,588 animals, a new record! The cases varied from emergency trauma accidents to poisonings to a sea lion surgery.



On the Wild Side

To protect the vulnerable endemic Galapagos wildlife such as blue footed boobies, giant land tortoises and Darwin finches, all of whom evolved to be unafraid of humans and predators, we worked on a number of fronts to protect them.

We performed over 570 sterilizations in 2016, with the permission of the Galapagos government agency ABG. Each spay + neuter surgery significantly reduces the number of dogs and cats that could prey on the native wildlife, and spread disease to wildlife.

The Darwin doctors team de-parasitized 1,566 animals, from invasive worms, ticks and fleas and treated many animals for tick-borne diseases! This not only protects the endemic wildlife from deadly infestations, but also the human population. Ehrlichia is the potentially fatal tick-borne disease we treat the most, which can potentially spread to humans.

Direct surgical care

Through a partnership with the Galapagos National Park, we treated wildlife ranging from a complex sea lion surgery to an owl with a broken leg, and advising the National Park vets on treating giant tortoises with wounds, and a joint sea turtle necropsy.

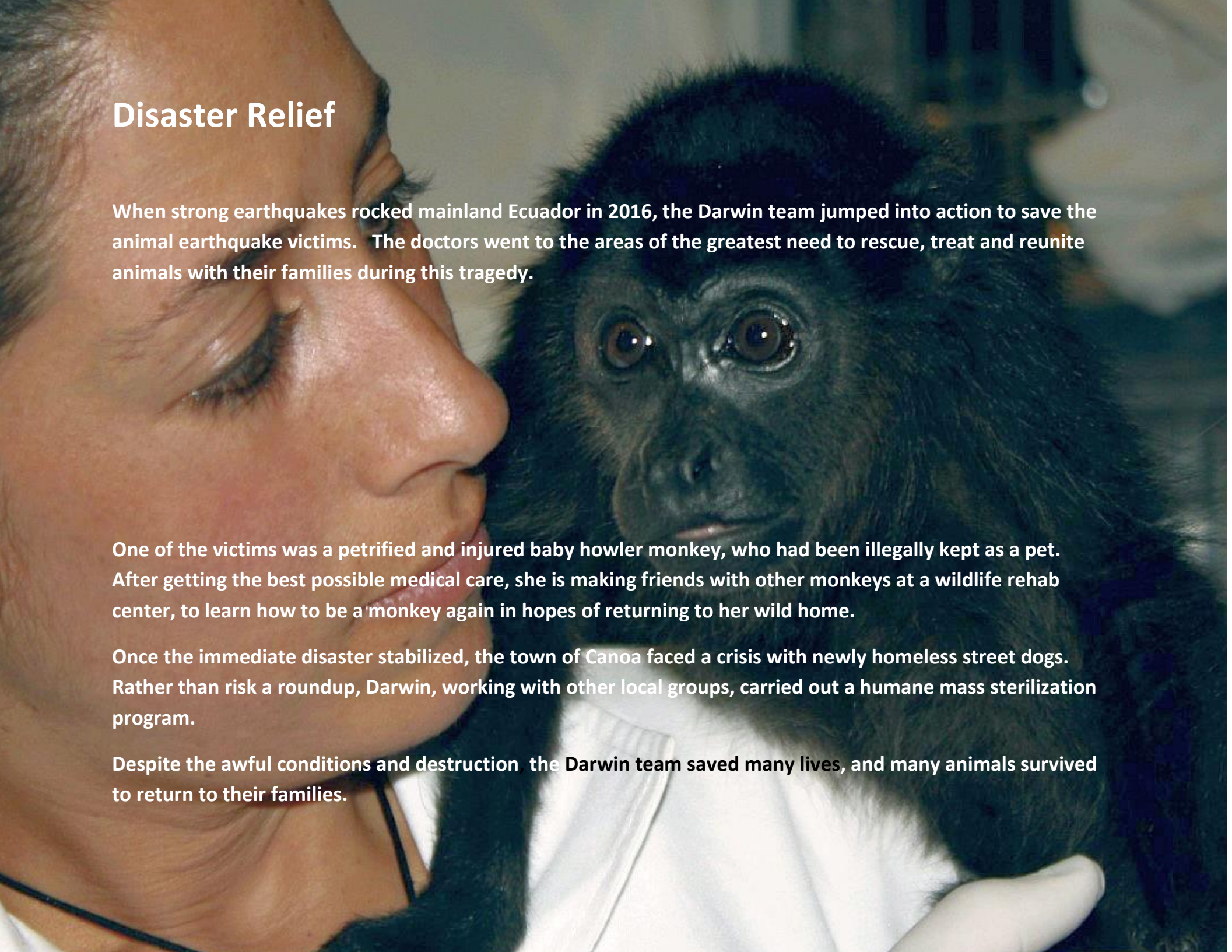
Disaster Relief

When strong earthquakes rocked mainland Ecuador in 2016, the Darwin team jumped into action to save the animal earthquake victims. The doctors went to the areas of the greatest need to rescue, treat and reunite animals with their families during this tragedy.

One of the victims was a petrified and injured baby howler monkey, who had been illegally kept as a pet. After getting the best possible medical care, she is making friends with other monkeys at a wildlife rehab center, to learn how to be a monkey again in hopes of returning to her wild home.

Once the immediate disaster stabilized, the town of Canoa faced a crisis with newly homeless street dogs. Rather than risk a roundup, Darwin, working with other local groups, carried out a humane mass sterilization program.

Despite the awful conditions and destruction the Darwin team saved many lives, and many animals survived to return to their families.





Education and Research

Community Humane Education and Outreach

With an existing model for community humane education events, we focused in 2016 on creating a curriculum acceptable in US school systems – that can be adapted for a school year long program in other cultures. We distributed copies of the educational comic, *A Piggy's Tale*, in Spanish and ran educational days. The Tomas De Berlanga School held a game day to engage students on getting the community involved in conversations about sterilizing pets.

By working with the Galapagos community and building trust, we've now inspired local students to form their own group for animals, KeMaHa, formed by three teenagers, Keyla, Mayela and Haelly. The girls and their supporters are well known for starting the conversation over sterilization with locals, but they don't stop there. If an owner tells the group that they would sterilize their pet but don't have the time to make it to the clinic, the girls will go to the owner's house, pick their pet up and bring them to the clinic themselves, just making it in time for their first class at school. At the end of the day, they will come back to the clinic, pick up the animal and bring it home for the owner, sterilized and deparasited.

Furthermore, the KeMaHa group actively educate the public on the cruelty of cutting ears and tails and push their local community to adopt pets instead of buying from a local (illegal) breeder. The girls also try to teach their community about the importance of exercise for dogs, and set a wonderful example in doing so themselves – taking groups of dogs to the highlands to play and get the exercise they need.

Since Darwin Animal Doctors has become a part of the community since 2010, children now grow up knowing what vets are and compassionate people come from all around the world to their home to save animals – and that they can save the animals and ecosystem of their own community.

A photograph of a veterinary clinic. In the foreground, a white dog is lying down, its head partially visible. Two people are performing surgery on the dog. The person on the left is wearing a blue scrub top and a yellow surgical cap with white flowers. The person on the right is wearing a blue scrub top, a blue surgical cap, and a blue face mask. Both are wearing white gloves. They are using surgical instruments on the dog's body. The background shows a typical clinic setting with shelves and various items.

An International Training Clinic

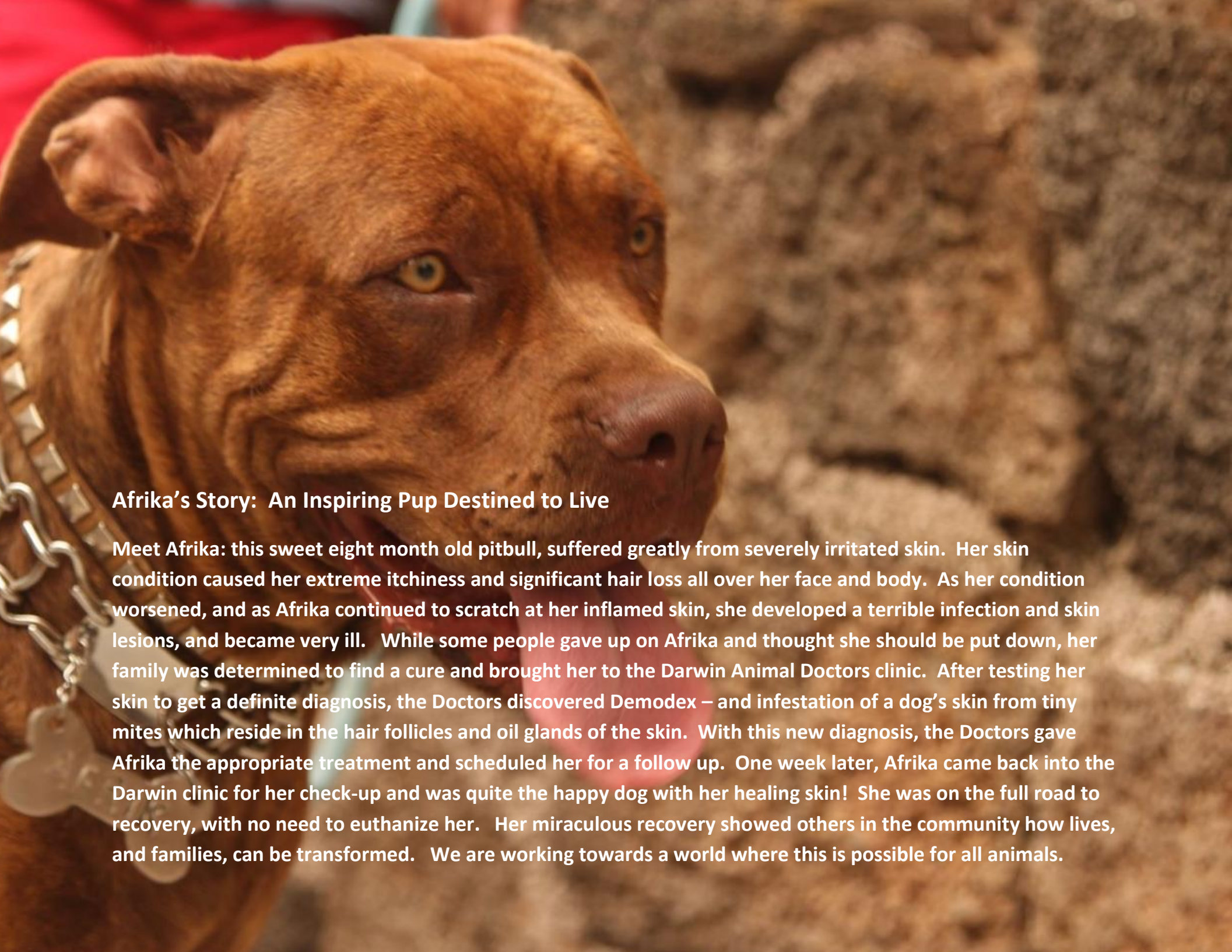
Dr. Carmen Barba Claassens, our clinic veterinarian for 2016, quickly became a much beloved member of the Galapagos community with her big smile, love for animals and children, and trusted veterinary skills. She trained local Galapagos volunteers, international volunteer vet students from around the world, and coordinated our volunteer veterinarians and vet techs.

Truly reflecting the Galapagos Island's status as a United National World Heritage Site, fifty volunteers representing eleven nationalities and five continents trained and saved animals with us.

We love sharing knowledge, training and friendships with the veterinary community around the world.

Essential Research

With advanced laboratory and tests we can run through the clinic, we've been able to publish our first research study about invasive diseases in the Galapagos. Through this research, we are working towards long-term solutions for the disease eradication.



Afrika's Story: An Inspiring Pup Destined to Live

Meet Afrika: this sweet eight month old pitbull, suffered greatly from severely irritated skin. Her skin condition caused her extreme itchiness and significant hair loss all over her face and body. As her condition worsened, and as Afrika continued to scratch at her inflamed skin, she developed a terrible infection and skin lesions, and became very ill. While some people gave up on Afrika and thought she should be put down, her family was determined to find a cure and brought her to the Darwin Animal Doctors clinic. After testing her skin to get a definite diagnosis, the Doctors discovered Demodex – and infestation of a dog's skin from tiny mites which reside in the hair follicles and oil glands of the skin. With this new diagnosis, the Doctors gave Afrika the appropriate treatment and scheduled her for a follow up. One week later, Afrika came back into the Darwin clinic for her check-up and was quite the happy dog with her healing skin! She was on the full road to recovery, with no need to euthanize her. Her miraculous recovery showed others in the community how lives, and families, can be transformed. We are working towards a world where this is possible for all animals.