

WALKING WITH ANGELS

A day in the lives of our fieldworkers, which is emotionally draining, but also deeply rewarding.

It is around 10:00 on a Monday morning. An elderly woman comes walking down the street in Ashbury, a residential area on the outskirts of Montagu. She greets the AML team friendly and disappears into a house. Her Zamaleck (*Langeberg slang for a brand of beer*) is almost finished. It is the beginning of February. Montagu is hot and bothered.

The ‘To-do-List’ is stuck to the dashboard of Matilda (AML’s bakkie). It has the name and number of the street, the name of the owner and the pet, and what the visit is about. AML’s dedicated fieldworkers, Toni van Houweninge and Ronell Spera, are ready for the day. Matilda is packed with tick and flea treatments, snack parcels for the puppies and two full buckets of pellets for the adult dogs. It is part of their weekly routine. The list is not long but it is going to be a busy morning. Because these two animal lovers deviate from the list whenever an animal is in need. They start with a check-up on a dog that has been sterilized, and notice there is another puppy running around in the yard. Toni, who is currently in her second year to qualify as a veterinarian assistant, checks if the pup has been sterilized. She is not and ends up on the “to-be-sterilized” list.

Next is a visit to remind the owners of the upcoming sterilization of their pet, and to make a note of the size of the crate that will be needed for the pick-up. Another visit is to a difficult customer who has not paid for the sterilization and treatment of their pet. Another (empty) promise is made to pay.

There is hardly a yard without an animal. Several dogs are wandering around the streets. Many of them are females who have recently had puppies or are about to give birth. AML tries to have all bitches sterilized once they are six months old. “We get despondent when people get another animal while they are

unable to provide for the ones they have,” remarks Toni. Fieldwork is hard, dirty, and often thankless work. Ronell and Toni are active in Ashbury and Mandela Square, the small informal settlement adjacent to Ashbury. Lesley Beviss-Challinor, AML’s secretary, is active in Zolani, outside Ashton.

They are no strangers to the community. Some of the residents venture out to meet them, have a chat and talk about the welfare of their pets. The dogs come running too. Even the cats. They

know they will get a friendly word, a rub and something to eat.

They are barely halfway through the to-do-list when people call them to come and have a look at a dog. Meida lies in her kennel, covered in flies and unable to get out by herself. She is immediately taken to the AML clinic, but she is unsavable. It appears that a bone got stuck in her mouth or throat. She was rake thin.

“We need to educate people about animals and how to treat them. Pets are not commodities. They cannot be kept on a chain in the warm sun. They need shelter, water, food, and exercise,”

says Ronell. At a house where Ronell and Toni stop to make a sterilization arrangement the children tell them about a dog that is malnourished and has signs of mange. They direct them to the house where the dog is tied up on a short rope in the boiling February sun. Animal abuse must be reported. “The work is emotionally draining,” they admit. They assist with primary healthcare like minor injuries, mange, tick and flea treatment as well as deworming.

A dog with mange is depressed, tail between the legs, shy, and often rake thin with hardly any hair. Once they are treated their demeanor changes. They blossom and bounce with joy. “That is when the work is exceptionally rewarding. We can see we make a difference,” they conclude.



Toni van Houweninge, Ronell Spera and AML's bakkie Matilda, in Ashbury.

Dear Readers and Animal Lovers,

The year is already on a trot, and it is with great pride that we share some of the exciting things the AML team has been up to.

This is our first newsletter for 2023 and the content has been written by our inhouse journalist Amanda Visser. It is produced by our long-time volunteer Peter Blum.

We strive to be a voice for the animals in our community and depend on you to make a difference. AML wants to express its gratitude for the support we receive from all of you. It helps us to continue with the unselfish work we do.

Let's talk some more.

Hilton Preston (chair) and Lesley Beviss-Challinor (secretary)

OUR TOP DOG, HILTON

Animals Matter Langeberg has a small, but highly dedicated team with big dreams for the organisation. **Meet our chairman, Hilton Preston.**



Hilton with a picture of his younger self, dreaming about sloths.



Daisy, the beautiful poster dachshund girl.



Skye who lived to 22 years. Here seen practicing couch camouflage.



Savanna, Skye's sister - now also 22 years old.

How long have you been chair of AML?

I have been chair since AML's inception in April 2019.

How did AML come about?

A small group of community members felt the local SPCA was losing support due to national council (NSPCA) mismanagement. We felt it necessary to establish a new organisation to meet the needs of the local community. We may be a small group, but we are showing big results!

What is your dream for AML?

My dream for AML is to see it fulfil all needs, including dealing with cruelty cases and rehoming which is currently not part of our mandate. This will only become a reality if more people volunteer and local authorities, like the municipality, come the table.

Why is AML important for Montagu?

Backyard breeding is a real concern. Without the efforts of our local field workers, these numbers could easily spiral out of control. The local SPCA is inundated as it is hence, the need for additional efforts.

Why is AML important to you?

Each of us should have a sense of responsibility towards our community. My passion lies with giving a voice to the voiceless - our furry children.

Do you have animals?

From five animals, I am currently down to one. Losing each one hurts incredibly. From Daisy the dachshund, to Skye the beautiful chinchilla cat, I miss each one and think of them daily. Skye was recently put to sleep and reached an old age of 22. Her sister Savannah is still fighting the good fight at the ripe age of 22 ...

What is the best part of being a pet owner?

Unconditional love. You are guaranteed to experience it with animals.

Do you take your pets with you on holiday?

I would love taking my animals with me on holiday, but some do not travel well...

Your message to Montagu pet owners?

I would like to see more dog owners collar and tag their dogs, even if they think their dogs can't get out. I have seen many examples of escapees without tags. It could be so much easier to reunite animals and their owners if they did have a collar and tag.

Do you have a favourite animal?

My favourite animal is a sloth. I tend to move through life at a similar speed.

"Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened." - Anatole France.

Veterinary hands-on training with AML



"One of the biggest things that I had to accomplish was to learn to trust myself."

After studying for six years to become a qualified veterinarian there is another 18 months where the student must practice what has been preached. This "work-integrated" training period is like learning to ride a bicycle without any support. You start out all wobbly and may even fall a few times. But once you get the hang of it, your self-confidence increases.

Dr Rozaan Grobler, community service vet, has completed her training period with AML and describes it as an incredible learning experience. "It was a challenge coming straight from Onderstepoort into the working environment. Even though I was qualified as a vet I was totally on my own," she says.

Veterinarians from the Robertson Animal Clinic and Cornerstone Veterinary Services stepped up and mentored her until she ended under the watchful eye of Dr Colin Skinner, AML's resident vet. "I consider myself lucky to have been able to work with so many different veterinarians. It allowed me to pick up different techniques and left me with a mountain of knowledge."

Self-confidence

Rozaan says you are under the illusion that you have all the knowledge necessary to do the job once you have your degree.

She remembers the initial anxiety when she had to figure it out all on her own. "I couldn't remember anything, and I was so scared of making mistakes. I lacked self-confidence.

One of the biggest things that I had to accomplish was to learn to trust myself." Her clinical skills have increased and as the time went by, she started to believe in herself, and her self-confidence grew.

Making a difference

As a community service vet working with AML, focusing on the needs of animals in poorer communities, she was exposed to neglect, abuse and even cruelty against animals.

"The fact that we are here to make a difference and ensure a better outcome for owners and their animals is part of the reward. As you work with the pets and their owners and see how the animals are healthier, happier and better looked after is rewarding. Many of the owners start to understand their responsibilities and to show pride in the way they take care of their pets. That is the best," says Rozaan.



Dr Rozaan Grobler (left) operating during a busy sterilization morning with Dr Keri Beviss-Challinor at the AML Clinic.

This young veterinarian now starts her career at a private practice in Cape Town. She has been replaced with Dr Sadiyya Dhan at our community clinic.

We welcome Dr Sadiyya Dhan, our new community service vet, after Dr Rozaan Grobler finished her practical training at the AML Community Clinic.



PREVENT PET POISONING – be prepared and avoid those lilies

Veterinarians have seen their fair share of animal poisoning, and although there are no real antidotes to poisons, they have drugs that can work quickly. We may think there is no harm in "spoiling" our beloved fur kids, but some food products can be harmful to them.

AML's resident vet, Dr Colin Skinner, suggests keeping washing soda (sodium carbonate) crystals in the house. They can buy some time when you suspect your pet has digested something poisonous. It

is readily available at any supermarket. "The crystals should be about the size of a thumb nail. When you suspect your animal has been poisoned stick the washing soda lump in the back of its throat," he advises. "It will quickly induce vomiting. The biggest hurdle to overcome is to get the toxic substance out of the body."

Plants

One of the worst plants people keep in and around the house are lilies, especially

for cats. "All lilies are poisonous to cats. If your cat has been poisoned by lilies, there is no home treatment. You must see the vet," says Dr Colin. Another plant that is extremely poisonous for humans and animals is the Nerium Oleander (selonsroos in Afrikaans). It may be fatal when digested.

Dogs chewing everything

Objects may not be poisonous in themselves, but they can cause major stomach irritation.

PREVENT PET POISONING

"Get the pet to vomit quickly before they cause damage inside the stomach. Foreign objects such as rubber or plastic that cause obstruction in the esophagus or larynx or end up in the stomach may require surgery. Dogs just love chewing things - that is the nature of a dog," remarks Dr Colin.

Keep your Veterinarian's phone number on hand and get your pet to them if you suspect poisoning.

11 COMMON HOUSEHOLD ITEMS THAT ARE TOXIC TO YOUR DOG

The 11 Most Toxic Foods for Dogs Felcana

These foods are commonly consumed and enjoyed by most people, but did you know they are toxic to dogs? Here are 11 foods you should avoid feeding your dog.

Alcohol	Chocolate	Antifreeze	Xylitol	Avocado
Caffeine	Rat poison/Slug pellets	Grapes and Raisins	Macadamia nuts	Mouldy foods or raw yeast dough
				Garlic and Onions

Source: <https://felcana.com/blogs/blog/household-items-toxic-to-dogs>

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For the love of art and animals

Only good things can happen when you are an artist and an animal lover. We found that in Janine de Wet, who with Sandy Milln, organized the Montagu Art Association's fundraiser exhibition at the end of last year in Montagu Nature Garden.

Around 30 artists donated 60 art works, and the proceeds of the more than 30 paintings that were sold on the day were donated to AML and Montagu Cares. Guest artists Raymond Andrews, Carolyn Metcalf, Hannah Naude and Barbara Sheat also donated their works of art. The association forms a platform for artists to participate in workshops and get involved with community projects.

Passionate about animals

Janine says they are passionate about animals and will continue to support AML. "We are eager to have another fundraiser this



Janine de Wet with Lindy-Lou and Peggy-Sue.

year." She hopes the artists will again be generous in their contributions to repeat the event. "It is a win-win for everyone."

She is the proud owner of "the two best dogs in Montagu". Both Peggy-Sue (8 years) and Lindy-Lou (5 years) were adopted from the Winelands SPCA in Ashton.

"Being the owner of an animal brings you utter joy. There are loads of laughter every day. It is therapeutic and a privilege to be able to care for an animal," says

this local artist.

She encourages the people of Montagu to support the cause of non-profit organisations like AML by donating generously. This will allow them to continue with the selfless work in communities that are less privileged.

Zolani steri-thon

AML's hands-on secretary Lesley Beviss-Challinor organized the event in Zolani, outside Ashton.

On the day owners brought their animals to the community hall. They enjoyed a snack and a drink generously donated by Bonnievale Spar while they waited for their pets to recover after the procedure.

Montagu community members made sandwiches for everyone who participated and lend a hand to make the day a great success. We were able to sterilize more than 30 animals on the day.



Lesley Beviss-Challinor, AML secretary (left), and Macushla Falkener preparing a dog for sterilisation.

Give a dog a home

Winter is fast approaching. Imagine being left outside in the rain and cold with nowhere to get warm. We want to help our community with shelters for their animals. During our first kennel drive we were able to build 74 kennels for pet owners. Every contribution counts. Our banking details are: AML, Absa Current Account: 409 672 6161. Reference: KennelDrive.



Kennels are loaned out to the local community.

PLEASE HELP US SO WE CAN HELP OTHERS:

Use our SnapScan, GivenGain or PayFast accounts. Contact us on 076 578-4234 or email animalsmatterlangeberg@gmail.com
ABSA - AML Current Account # 409 672 6161

As a registered charity your donations receive a tax benefit.

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Send your comments, praise or suggestions for our WINTER edition to Amanda Visser at: amandavisser9@gmail.com | 082 820 3750

The layout of this newsletter was supervised by AlleyCat: www.peterblum.co.za