

## The BVA Overseas Group and its work

### What is the BVA Overseas Group?

The Overseas Group is a group, within the BVA, that links the BVA and its members with veterinary work in the developing world. The Group acts as a first point-of-contact at the BVA for vets who are based in developing countries, and it can also assist the increasing number of vet and vet students in the UK who wish to work or volunteer abroad. It therefore has a double remit: assisting vets abroad, and assisting vets and vet students who wish to work abroad. The Group has links with the Commonwealth Veterinary Association, The World Veterinary Association and the International Veterinary Students' Association, and the Group's members all have experience of veterinary work in developing countries.

### Why does the Overseas Group exist?

The Group exists to encourage and facilitate the provision of veterinary services in the developing world.

Vets and vet students in the developed world benefit from facilities and knowledge that, in many cases, are inaccessible to those in developing nations. By volunteering abroad, and sharing their knowledge and expertise, they can be of real value to vets and veterinary organisations in the developing world. Similarly, the skills and experience of vets and students in developing countries can offer vets from the West a new and different perspective on the way they view and approach their work and, indeed, their lives. The Overseas Group aims to facilitate this two-way transfer of knowledge and experience.

The Overseas Group recognises that vets have transferable skills that can offer animal welfare and humanitarian benefits globally. Although animals are the principle focus of veterinary attention, people who depend on those animals for their livelihoods and companionship also derive invaluable benefits. Promoting animal welfare in ways that are compatible with human aspirations is in keeping with the spirit of sustainable development, which the Group endorses.

### What does the Overseas Group do?

The Group's main role is in providing information, advice and contacts to vets and students abroad, or to vets and students wishing to work abroad. It can offer advice on sources of funding for overseas veterinary work, and it administers the BVA Overseas Travel Grant.

The Group also runs the BVA BookAid scheme, in which veterinary surgeons donate secondhand veterinary textbooks for distribution to developing countries. The Group co-ordinates collection of the books and arranges for them to be transported to places of need via vets and students travelling to those areas.

In 2006 the Group launched its Disaster Management Resource. This is a database holding details of vets and healthcare professionals throughout the world who have agreed to become a "point of contact" at times of crisis (e.g. natural disasters).

BVA Overseas Group

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Some recent examples of requests for assistance, and how the Overseas Group has been able to help, have included the following:

*Voluntary veterinary work in Madagascar*

"I am a British vet. My partner and I are currently organising a visit to Madagascar...we are keen to help with practical teaching at the veterinary college and to spend time with local vets to help improve their understanding of pregnancy diagnosis and general management of farm animals. I would be interested to know whether the BVA can offer any kind of help in supplying books and journals [and] would be extremely grateful if you can offer any help or advice"

*Voluntary veterinary work in Thailand*

"I began with the obligatory internet searches to find charity clinics abroad who would be willing to take me on and train me up. However, my random searches didn't get me very far, and so I decided to email the BVA to see if they could help. Helena Cotton (BVA Overseas Group) came up trumps in less than 24 hours, with a list of places with which they had had contact."

### **What can the Overseas Group do for me?**

If you are a vet or vet student working in a developing country, the Group can obtain information for you on aspects of veterinary work in the UK, or put you in touch with other vets who may be able to help. If you feel you could benefit from the BVA BookAid scheme please contact Helena Cotton on [helenac@bva.co.uk](mailto:helenac@bva.co.uk).

If you are a vet or student considering working in a developing country, the Group can provide lists of organisations requiring veterinary assistance (e.g. charities), can provide general advice and can put you in touch with vets who have worked in your country of interest, or who continue to do so. A handout - "Working overseas as a volunteer" – which has been compiled by the Group, is available on-line to help with the planning of your trip; visit: [www.bva.co.uk/profession/overseas/worldwide/volunteer\\_guidance.asp](http://www.bva.co.uk/profession/overseas/worldwide/volunteer_guidance.asp).

You may also be eligible to apply for funding for your trip. For further information please visit [www.bva.co.uk/profession/overseas/worldwide](http://www.bva.co.uk/profession/overseas/worldwide), or email Helena Cotton on [helenac@bva.co.uk](mailto:helenac@bva.co.uk).

### **What can I do for the Overseas Group?**

If you are travelling to do veterinary work abroad, *please contact the Group!!* You may not require advice or assistance, but our network of contacts relies on people informing us where they have been. By giving us permission to keep your contact details, your first-hand experience of a country can be of benefit to someone else who may wish to travel there in the future.

Please consider carrying some books with you, from our BookAid scheme. As well as being of value to the recipient, donating a book is also a nice goodwill gesture to be able to make to your host during your stay. The books are donated free of charge to the Overseas Group, and are delivered for free. All the Group asks is that you carry them with you.

For all queries and further information please visit [www.bva.co.uk/profession/overseas/worldwide](http://www.bva.co.uk/profession/overseas/worldwide), or email Helena Cotton on [helenac@bva.co.uk](mailto:helenac@bva.co.uk).

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