



## **SPCA VETERINARIAN VOLUNTEER INFORMATION PACK**

Thank you for considering volunteering at the SPCA Fiji Islands. These notes contain information to help you prepare for your travel to Fiji and to guide you during your time at the SPCA.

The SPCA was founded some 65 years ago. As with most Charitable Organisations in developing countries it has struggled to survive from time to time. But things are changing in Fiji. The first round of Vet Science students from the Fiji National University are due to graduate late in 2020. The SPCA plays host to a teaching vet and students 1.5 days per week. We highly value this relationship with the FNU Veterinary Science Department and by further developing our ties with the FNU and other stakeholders in animal welfare both in and beyond Fiji, we aim to bring the SPCA up to International Standards for both the Clinic and Shelter.

### **THE FIJI ISLANDS.**

Fiji is an Island Nation of approximately one million people. Over 300 islands make up Fiji. On the two main islands of Viti Levu and Vanau Levu the population is largely Fijian and Indo-Fijian. English is the official language of Fiji but command of the English language can vary greatly. Suva, where the clinic and shelter is located, is a bustling, developing city. It is an eclectic blend of Colonial, Pacific and modern architecture. As the economic and financial center of the South Pacific you will find that most services are available in Suva. There is a vibrant ex-pat community and many sporting and leisure activities on offer. Fiji is perhaps most famous for its superb island beaches, surfing, fishing and world famous scuba diving. The climate is tropical and it can be hot and humid in the Summer months. Suva experiences high rainfall during these months also.



### **1. WORKING IN AN ANIMAL SHELTER**

If you have never worked in an animal shelter before, you may find the SPCA Fiji Islands to be a challenging, albeit rewarding experience.

SPCA Fiji Islands follows the animal welfare model of the Five Freedoms and does provide euthanasia as a treatment option when appropriate.

- Freedom from hunger and thirst
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from pain, injury and disease
- Freedom to express normal behaviour
- Freedom from fear and distress



## **2. SPCA FIJI ISLANDS: AN ANIMAL SHELTER AND A VETERINARY CLINIC**

The SPCA Fiji Islands has two facilities (both operating on the same site):

1. SPCA Animal shelter - cares for homeless and unwanted cats and dogs. The shelter is generally always at capacity. The shelter cares for homeless, abandoned and surrendered animals. The shelter aims to re-home animals where possible, as well as educate pet owners and the public about responsible pet ownership.
2. SPCA Veterinary Clinic - provides all veterinary care required to the shelter animals, including parasite prophylaxis and vaccination schedules. The veterinary clinic also provides veterinary consultations and care to private pet owners. One of the objectives of the Society is to provide services at affordable local prices.

## **3. VETERINARY AVAILABILITY IN THE SUVA REGION SPCA**

There are two full-time paid veterinary positions at the SPCA. One is referred to as the Resident Vet and the other the Associate Vet. The former is the more experienced of the two and holds more clinic responsibilities. However these positions are not always filled and as a result there are often times when the SPCA relies solely on presence of short-term veterinary volunteers. There is also a private veterinary clinic (Vet Essentials) which is 2.5kms away from SPCA in Lami, to which clients are directed when there are no vets available at the SPCA.

## **4. SPCA VOLUNTEER VETERINARIAN - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Volunteers are generally required to work Monday to Friday from 8am to 5pm. The weekends are yours to explore our beautiful Island Nation.

SPCA's clinic and shelter protocols will be made available to you on your arrival and you will have an orientation and observation process to help you become familiar with our situation prior to commencing duties.

There are a number of tasks for a volunteer veterinarian at the SPCA. The exact tasks required on any given day will depend on if there is a full-time veterinarian and/or if there are other volunteer veterinarians at the SPCA.

Volunteer veterinary work includes:

- I. Veterinary care of all shelter animals
- II. Veterinary consultations, diagnostics, medicine and surgery
- III. De-sexing clinics (at times these clinics will be in more remote regions of Fiji but are dependent on Vets being available to remain at the Suva Clinic)



- IV. Assisting nurses with their daily tasks
- V. Observing procedural protocols in place for both the Clinic and Shelter

Note: Pet owners should always be advised of the veterinary service options available to them. There may be some services available at Vet Essentials that are not available at SPCA. SPCA works to maintain a good relationship with Vet Essentials. If indicated, please liaise with and organize referral to Vet Essentials when appropriate.

## 5. ANIMAL DISEASES

At the time of writing, Bluetongue is present in the bovine population in Fiji. Transmissible Venereal Disease is common in the dog population. Leptospirosis is also very common and a zoonotic risk (please see below)

## 6. HUMAN HEALTH

Please be aware that the following diseases are known common in Fiji:

- Leptospirosis
- Tuberculosis
- Hepatitis
- Measles
- Mumps
- Mosquito born viruses are present in Fiji. These include but are not exclusive to Dengue, Chikungunya and Zika virus.

A note on Leptospirosis: Leptospirosis occurs readily in human and animal populations in Fiji. Some local doctors have also anecdotally described a particularly aggressive form of Leptospirosis observed in some of their patients. Many of the dogs and cats in Fiji are jaundiced and have clinical signs fitting that of Leptospirosis. Definitive diagnosis is limited due to cost and access to diagnostics. Please take great care when coming in to contact with animal blood. It is recommended that gloves be worn at all times in the clinic. It is particularly important when there is any chance of coming in to contact with animal blood, including the placement IV catheters and cleaning of skin wounds.

It is recommended that you also please bring a supply of non-sterile and sterile gloves in your size. The SPCA often may have gloves in stock, but can sometimes run low.

Volunteers should have the following vaccinations as an absolute minimum:

1. Tetanus
2. Hepatitis A
3. Hepatitis B
4. Typhoid, Pertussis, Diphtheria
5. Measles, Mumps and Rubella
6. Chicken pox
7. Tuberculosis



## **7. ACCOMODATION**

Accommodation is generally provided to volunteer veterinarians. The resident veterinarian's house, which is usually used for this purpose, is approximately a 15 minute drive from the SPCA. It has three bedrooms and shared bathroom. If the Vet house is not available alternative accommodation may be arranged. Given enough notice of your arrival we should have a variety of alternative accommodation options for you.

The Vet house has the following facilities:

- Three bedrooms with 2 double beds and 2 single beds (single beds are put together to make double beds for more roomy sleeping if numbers allow).
- Linen: Pillow cases, bed sheets, mosquito nets, towels.
- Bathroom: Separate shower and bath, toilet. Hot water.
- Lounge room: Table and chairs.
- Phone and internet: There is no landline phone but there is wireless internet
- Kitchen: Fridge, stove, oven. Pot, fry pan, basic crockery and cooking utensils. There is usually a small selection of oils and spices in the cupboard as well.
- Laundry: Washing machine.
- Electricity: The current in Fiji is 240 volts AC 50Hz with three-pin power points, the same as in Australia and New Zealand.
- Fiji SIM cards are readily available – there is a Vodafone store at the exit of Nadi airport if you wish to organise a SIM as soon as you land. The store is on the left immediately Page 5 of 6 after you exit baggage claim and customs. There are also phone stores in Suva and the SPCA staff can assist you to find them. There is internet and wireless available at the SPCA, although it is only switched on when the office is open.
- The caretaker's Aka and Anasa live on site and are responsible for the cleaning and house maintenance. Anasa checks on the house late into the night and will make sure the house is secured each evening. Please be sure to introduce yourselves.

## **8. TRANSPORT**

A manual van may also be available to use, although this will vary as the van is utilised for transport of shelter and clinic animals. A driver's license is required to drive the vehicle. Some nationalities are permitted to drive in Fiji without an international license, provided they have a manual license from their country of origin. Please check with authorities in regards to your specific situation.

If the van is not available for use, an SPCA taxi is available. The SPCA manager will instruct you on how to book and pay for the SPCA taxi. The SPCA will cover taxi costs that are directly related to SPCA business. For personal use, taxis and buses are readily available in Suva and are very reasonably priced.

## **9. HEALTH INSURANCE**

Please make sure you have comprehensive health insurance to cover you for the duration of your stay. Please ensure that your health insurance covers all activities you may be undertaking in your volunteer veterinary role.



## **10. DOCUMENTATION**

We will need to know if you will be spending some time before or after the work at SPCA as this will assist in the type of permit/visa that you will require. Four weeks prior to your arrival in Fiji, please forward to following to the SPCA manager

1. A copy of your flight details, including entry and exit from Fiji.
2. A copy of your travel insurance.
3. A verified copy of your veterinary license and veterinary degree.
4. Contact details of the veterinary board through which you hold your license
5. Driver's license if required for driving the van (including international license if required).

These documents are required to register you with the Ministry of Agriculture in order for you to practice as a veterinarian in Fiji.

## **11. CLOTHING AND DRESS CODE**

Please dress professionally and appropriately as you would for veterinary work anywhere in the world. Please keep in mind that Fiji has a warm climate and while the clinic is air conditioned you may need to be outside in the shelter or the community. Whilst the climate in Fiji may allow for a comparatively relaxed dress code, professionalism is still to be maintained. Please adhere to the following dress code.

Parts of Fiji are still very conservative and you are required to dress appropriately when visiting villages (for instance). Our staff will advise you on this.

- Shorts or long pants are admissible. Please make sure shorts are loose fitting and not too short, just above the knee is professionally appropriate.
- Shirts or polo shirts. No T-shirts. No sleeveless tops.
- 3x scrub tops (there are not always scrub tops or uniforms available to borrow at the SPCA)
- Shoes must be fully enclosed with a good sole. Sneakers or similar lace up shoes are appropriate. Slip-on shoes that have the top of the foot exposed are not appropriate foot wear.

## **12. PERSONAL EQUIPMENT**

Below is a list of items recommended you may find useful to have with you

- Stethoscope (there are some at SPCA, but they are often all in use).
- Water bottle, hat, sunscreen, pen and notebook, mosquito repellent, mosquito coils, matches, Tupperware (there is no Tupperware at the house), reusable shopping bags
- Laptop or similar in case you would like to record any of your cases or findings for your own records. SPCA has Vision veterinary software
- It is recommended that you also please bring a supply of non-sterile and sterile gloves in your size. The SPCA would usually have gloves in stock, but can sometimes run low.

### **13. PERMITS**

If you are volunteering for two weeks or less, you do not need to acquire a work permit. You will be granted a Temporary Business Visa on entry to Fiji. If your stay will be for longer than two weeks, the SPCA manager will discuss work permits with you and will let you know if any further information or documentation is required. If you arrive intending to work only for 2 weeks and then wish to extend your time it is a relatively simple process to get an extension on your temporary business visa.

### **14. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

Please be aware that you will be required to interact with a variety of people from different cultural, economic, social and linguistic backgrounds. Whilst sometimes veterinary practice requires difficult conversations and dealing with stressful and sad situations, we ask that you remain professional and respectful at all times. Please remember that anyone who brings their animal to the SPCA is looking for assistance and asking for help to improve their pet's health. We want every pet owner to build a relationship with our shelter, trust our staff and know that they can come to us at any time for help. All animals in the care of SPCA are important and deserve veterinary care and attention, whether privately owned or shelter animals. At SPCA we treat all creatures with patience and respect. Discrimination, vulgar language and verbal or physical abuse are not tolerated, whether towards humans or animals.

### **FINALLY**

We sincerely hope that you are able to join us for a period at the SPCA. We will do everything in our power to ensure your stay is both an enjoyable and productive experience. We cannot adequately express our gratitude to people such as you for volunteering your time and expertise to help the animals of Fiji.



<https://www.fiji.travel/us/information/contact-tourism-fiji>