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# EASE NEWS



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ENVIRONMENTAL ANIMAL SANCTUARY AND EDUCATION  
THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE **FRIENDS OF EASE**

Volume 17, Issue 1  
**July 2017**

## Editorial

*G*reetings to EASE Friends around the world! This summer issue includes an article from an EASE Friend in the USA, Hildreth Rinehart, a book review from Deirdre Chitwood, and important information on a deadly dog disease for the canine lovers amongst us, as well as other items of interest for animal-lovers and updates on EASE matters.

*With thanks for your continued support.*

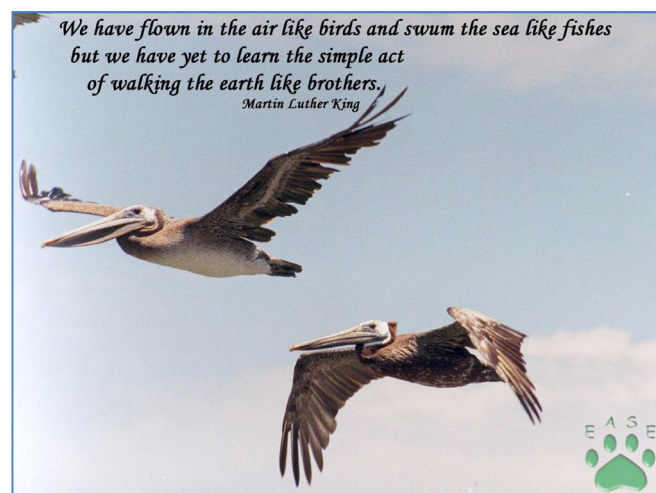
MELINDA HILL  
EASE PROJECT MANAGER

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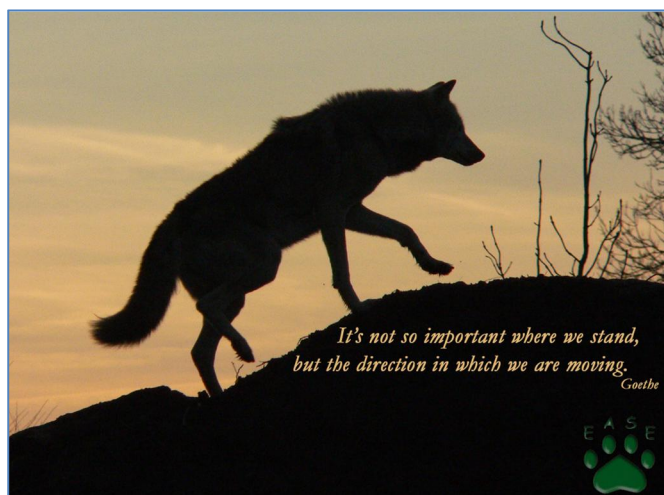
## EASE Screensavers

**W**e're pleased to report on a new page on the EASE website following its launch at the beginning of this year. This is a page of screensavers, comprising a selection of EASE photographs matched with appropriate sayings.

These can be downloaded and used as screensavers or wallpapers for your computer or laptop. Simply visit the EASE website Screensavers page, click on the pictures of your choice and then right-click to save them onto your computer.



The lovely selection of photographs of animals has been compiled and edited by EASE Friend Vince Smith, so many thanks to Vince for his sterling work and terrific photographs.



## Raja's Transformation

by Hildreth Rinehart

**T**he early clairvoyant experiences in my life with animals were small and far between – a dream here, a knowing there. It wasn't until I fell in love with a horse after moving from Canada to rural Tennessee in the USA that this level of communication became so vivid. It wasn't until Raja the cat that those communications reached beyond physical death.

So it may be thanks to a Tennessee Walker named Beauty, who got me by the soul and wouldn't let go until I helped resolve her pitiful situation and, as it turns out, those of many other four-leggeds who had it pretty bad. And thanks to the great overpopulation of companion animals in the South, we had a houseful of dogs, puppies, the occasional kitten, squirrel, bunny, turtle... and sometimes even stray cows and horses! Our daily walks became an eclectic mix of fosters, family pets and neighboring dogs, along the remote country road. They came from the side of the highway, people's yards, our yard, local rescue groups – they found us and we found them, nursed, healed, shined up, rebalanced and, perhaps most importantly, acknowledged their very essences, so that we could find their humans, the ones they would stay with for life. Those humans who would drive up from Florida or down from Ottawa, fly out from California or have them flown to Alaska. And the clairvoyance and clairsaudience grew all the while, quietly under the surface, ready in case we should take notice.

We learned how to stay sane and not get dragged into the despair of the human, animal and planet situation. We discovered that there are many ways to help an animal in need, not all of them physical. A book could be written on the variety of each situation: there were gloved night visits to mailboxes with typed notes regarding dogs living on chains, stake-outs in the county sheriff's office, not-for-profits formed, visits to school principals, musicals on humane animal treatment, and even one case of breaking and entering which we will not go

into! We learned that to help an animal from neglect or abuse was often to provide education, care and healing to the human who allowed it to happen. Our hearts grew heavy yet we chose again and again the weight of riches to fill them up, rather than sadness.

Each story is unique and special, but Raja cat is the first to teach me communication from beyond physical form. Raja was one of a litter of six, deposited in an outbuilding on the property we shared with friends – an old Amish village of about 130 acres. He was the loud one, black, long-haired with clear green eyes. He came to join our family, sort of by default. When we moved back up North, I tried to leave him with friends since we were up to seven cats then! However, he joined us for the move and grew to the age of 15 before he was to become the only animal in our family to get so sick that he needed to be put to sleep. So, here we are, over 15 years of caring for as many of these beloved creatures as we could, and now – for the first time – we must help one of them to die.

It was an aggressive lymphatic cancer and medicines were not reversing it or



providing enough comfort. It was a clear choice and we had the assistance of a professional animal communicator, Irene, to find the timing, and a lovely sensitive veterinarian to come to the house when the time was right. It was a full turn around for me, from helping him to live and thrive all those years to telling him it was time to go. In his last week Raja made his rounds of each dog and cat in the family, having a bedtime snuggle with each one in turn. He stopped eating and could not walk well. He



then gave me the message, as Irene said he would, "I'm ready". It was unmistakable.

His passing was beautiful and brimming with love and support from his humans. It was like dropping off to sleep and then his body gradually shut down over about ten minutes. I held him and felt his essence swirl around his body as he worked out that things were winding down. I then got a gentle message to break physical contact. I let him go and immediately felt what I can only describe as his essence jumping from his body and then saw a brief glimpse into this beautiful pattern of pulsing, thriving energy, just like a portal opened up and he flew in.

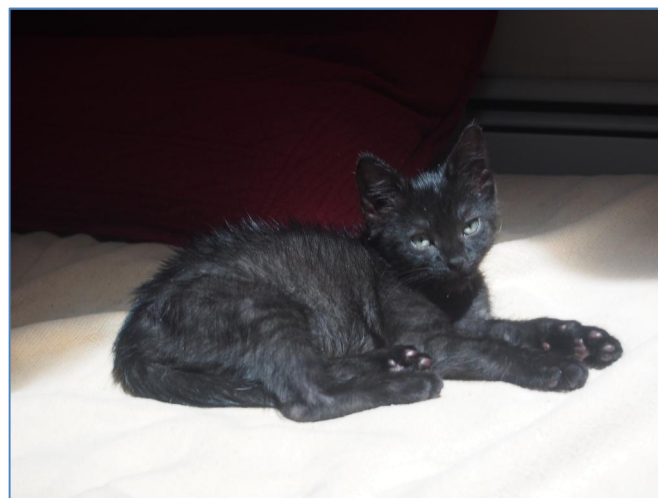
He was gone and I felt the thread that connects our hearts stretch out with him into this life force, and with it came the knowing that one gift of death is that it joins these heart threads across time and space, connecting us all unconsciously to the very stuff that life is made of, creating a web that is part of the life force itself. It was stunning to discover how much presence Raja had been to our family until then – a quietly noble heart of the family.

We buried Raja at the edge of a forest behind the house with a favorite cat toy to wish him joy in his next cat life. And this is the thing: I believe in reincarnation. The only tangible proof that I have is the seasons – winter becomes spring and so on. I simply feel that it makes sense. Nature is very efficient and doesn't waste anything. So I made a deal with Raja before he left. I told him that if he wanted to live with us again in his next life, that we would welcome him. I reminded him of his loud meow when he was a kitten and told him that is how I'd know it was him. I told him about our friend, Nicoal, down the road who fosters kittens for the Humane Society and that was one way he could find his way back to us if he needed to.

I never felt moved to visit Raja's grave until about three and a half months later. I was out working on the horse fence one evening when I was suddenly compelled to go over to his grave. As I was walking towards it, a brief feeling of glee overcame me and with it the translation "He's in a kitten body!" Once there I sent him love and strength wherever he is, feeling that heart connection still alive as my

hands pulsed with healing force. I reminded him about the guidelines for finding us if he wanted to.

That night I got an email from Nicoal who had just brought home two black, long-



haired kittens! So, next day, off we go to meet possible Raja. This is completely new territory for me. The moment I walked in and saw the two kittens (a brother and sister) in their kitten tree I said "He's the one on the left!" He looked at me and let out a "MEOW"! We spent the rest of the visit giving him tests and he simply wanted to be with me the entire time, even attaching himself to my neck the way I used to carry Raja, draped over my shoulder. Two more visits and three weeks later, we brought him home to rejoin his family, now called Pluto Arjuna Raju (Juna). He passed every test and I could not risk going back on my word.

We can never know for sure if this is the reincarnation of Raja. My heart believes it to be so and there is plenty of evidence to support it. Whatever the case, one thing remains infallible – these furry beings who share their lives with us humans carry the keys to unlocking, healing and infinitely expanding our hearts. I hope this story may bring comfort and easement to others whose heart threads have been stretched into the unknown. May we do all that we can to grow the value, respect and care now needed by every species across the globe, and return the favor with hearts of abundant gladness and gratitude.



## News Watch

*A recent Canadian study indicates that having a pet dog or cat may help to reduce a child's chances of developing allergies and becoming obese in later years.*

The researchers carried out a range of tests on faecal samples taken from infants to assess the levels and composition of the bacteria in their guts. Gut bacteria is widely known to play an important role in future health. Infant gut bacteria is thought to be influenced by several factors including the method of birth delivery, drinking breast milk versus formula, and treatment of the mother with antibiotics. So the hypothesis that furry pets could boost infant immunity has increasingly been discussed.

Overall, the study found that the composition of gut bacteria was richer and more diverse in infants who had been exposed to pets both in the womb and after birth.

Out of the 746 infants, 46.8% of households owned furry pets during and after pregnancy. The majority of pet owners had dogs, closely followed by cats. Overall, the composition of gut bacteria was richer and more diverse in infants who had been exposed to pets during both the pre-natal and post-natal period. In particular, there was an abundance of two bacteria, ruminococcus and oscillospira, and previous research has linked each of these strains to improved gut health.

The researchers add that previous studies have found an association between lower levels of these bacteria and a greater likelihood of childhood allergies and obesity. The study also found that a baby's exposure to pets while in the womb resulted in lower levels of streptococcal bacteria in their gut.

These findings pave the way for future research around pet exposure and health outcomes in individuals, especially around allergies.



## Protective nose-band covers

*by Angela Garner*

*Following on from previous articles about the annual El Rocio festival in Spain, I'm really pleased to report that this year a number of equines attended the 2017 festival already wearing one of the protective nose-band covers given out last year.*

*To recap, on hearing that I planned to make some fleecy protectors against the serrated metal nose-bands often used to control the equines at El Rocio, which I did for the 2016 and 2015 festivals, EASE kindly covered the costs of the materials.*

*Following on from this, in preparation for the 2017 event The Donkey Sanctuary arranged for large numbers of the fleecy protectors to be made by volunteers of a sewing group. Earlier in the year, I was delighted to see this first batch of 400 had been made, using the specifications of the ones I created, with another 400 planned before the actual festival. That saved me a lot of sewing!*



*To find out more about what is being done to improve equine welfare at this annual festival, visit: <https://www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk/el-rocio-2017>*

The animal....gifted with.... senses we have lost,  
living by voices we shall never hear, they are  
not brethren, they are not underlings;  
they are other nations....

Henry Beston

## Leishmaniasis: A Deadly Dog Disease

**L**eishmaniasis is little known in the UK but is a prevalent disease in much of Europe and warmer areas of the world. It is an infection caused by a protozoal (single-celled) organism which lives in host bodies and is spread by female sandflies, and dogs are the principal reservoir hosts for this infection. Although it is not currently commonly seen in the UK, the increased number of rescue dogs being brought into the UK from organisations and individuals from countries such as Spain, Greece, Cyprus and Turkey mean that cases of Leishmaniasis ('Leish' for short) are sadly becoming more common. Dogs that travel abroad are also at risk of contracting the disease, so pet owners taking their dogs on holiday will need to be informed and aware of this disease.

The mechanism of infection is that a female sandfly becomes infected by drinking blood from an infected dog, the organism grows and develops inside the sandfly, and when the sandfly bites a new dog it injects it with the parasite. Then the local white blood cells attack and try to kill the organism but it has evasive mechanisms to enable survival, so the organism grows and bursts out of white cells spreading further within the body.

The outcome following infection depends on the host dog's immune system. Once infected, dogs will either clear the infection, have subclinical infection (harbour the parasite for a number of months or up to seven years before any signs become apparent) or develop signs of active disease. It is not possible to predict an individual dog's response to infection with the parasite.

### Symptoms of Leish

There are a wide variety and combination of clinical signs of Leishmaniasis that can be seen, and active infection can be quite debilitating. Dogs can develop skin lesions such as baldness with sores and itchy broken skin that is slow to heal. This usually occurs over prominent bony areas like elbows and knees but can also occur around the face. There is also a visceral form of the disease where the Leishmania organisms affect organ systems like the liver, kidneys and bone marrow. Severe cases can lead to liver or kidney

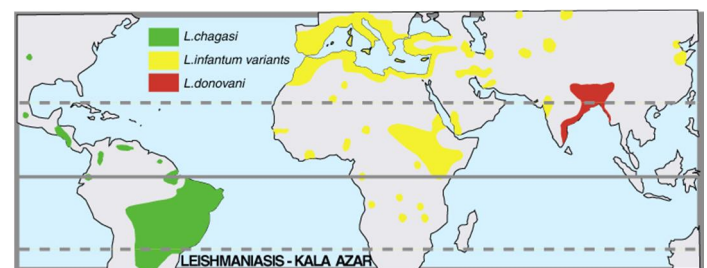
failure and can be fatal. Once a dog has been diagnosed with Leishmaniasis active infection it is not possible to cure the infection, and long-term medication and monitoring is usually required to control the clinical signs and maintain a good quality of life. Active infections if left untreated can be fatal.

### Can Leishmaniasis be transmitted to humans or other dogs?

Although some forms of the disease can be carried by humans, direct dog-to-human transmission has never been reported, even among veterinarians who have handled hundreds of dogs with Leishmaniasis, and the canine strain of the disease is different to the strain that affects humans in other parts of the world. Direct canine to canine transmission is extremely rare and the vast majority of canine cases are infected directly via sandfly bites.

### Where are dogs most at risk?

Dogs are at risk from the disease anywhere where there are sandflies present. They are most abundant in gardens, around houses in the countryside, and in parklands and woodland. The period of activity of all sand fly vectors is from sunset to sunrise. The dangerous times of year are different in different countries. Around the Mediterranean, Leishmaniasis is transmitted from May to September, or if there is a warm summer there can be increased activity into October. It is endemic in most of Greece, much of Italy, the Balkans, Malta, southern France, many parts of Portugal and Spain (particularly in the south-east and the Balearic Islands) and in the humid parts of North Africa.



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### How can we prevent Leishmania infection in our pet dogs?

Prevention is a two-part process, the first of which is a vaccination to strengthen the immune response before infection occurs. If your dog is



travelling abroad, vaccination prior to travelling would be recommended: the Canileash vaccine is manufactured by Virbac and is the first vaccine for this disease to be available in Europe. However, it must be noted that this has only limited efficacy, and cannot be relied upon to guarantee non-infection. Dogs require a course of three injections given at three-weekly intervals from the age of six months. A single annual booster is required to maintain relative immunity. Dogs that have previously travelled abroad should be tested for Leishmania antibodies prior to vaccination to ensure they have not been exposed to the disease previously, although bear in mind that even a negative result cannot rule out entirely that the disease is not present and dormant.

The second step in prevention is to reduce exposure to sandfly bites, using appropriate anti-parasite measures. It is also advisable to avoid wooded areas at dawn and dusk as these are peak activity times for the sandflies. Additionally keeping dogs indoors at night time is beneficial to reduce the risk of infection. Scalibor collars and Advantix flea treatment both act to kill sandflies and help reduce the chance of dogs getting bitten.

As increasing numbers of people travel abroad with their pets, awareness of this disease needs to be highlighted. It is of particular concern as once dogs are infected they cannot be cured of the disease. Treatment can be initiated but is expensive and patients require long-term monitoring. If caught late the disease can be fatal, so prevention of infection is definitely preferable.

#### Useful websites:

[www.leishvet.org](http://www.leishvet.org) – an association of veterinarians from different countries focussing research and clinical activity on Leishmaniasis, offering best practice protocols.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/447077055372021/> - a Facebook group called 'Living with Leish' that offers excellent advice, information and support for people with dogs infected with Leishmaniasis.

**Sammy's Story, by Mel:** *The reason I know about this horrible disease is that my own dog, Sammy, whom I brought over from Turkey, has*

*Leishmaniasis. In his case it started with what appeared to be dermatitis on his face last December. He was treated with steroids, which is the usual treatment for dermatitis but sadly only makes the Leish worse as it affects the dog's immune system, which is its only defence against the disease. After four weeks of steroids had no effect on the worsening dermatitis – now spreading to his legs and chest – my vet fortunately suspected Leishmaniasis and tested Sammy's bloods for its antibodies as evidence of previous exposure. Sadly Sammy's blood results proved positive for Leish and in the meantime he had presented with further symptoms, including high temperature, stiffness in the limbs and runny eyes. The current best medication to treat the disease was ordered from Spain, and in the three weeks it took for this to arrive Sammy continued to deteriorate. The prognosis appeared gloomy.*

*Once the medication arrived – milteforan, a kind of chemotherapy administered in food for a 28-day period – Sammy started on it straight-away.*

*By day five he was brighter, by day ten he was playing and running, and by the end of the course his hair was growing back. Now, six weeks on, he is looking great and fully back to his own joyous self!*

*Blood tests in a few months will show the degree to which his Leish is still active, and we hope it will be in remission and will stay so for many years ahead. While it is in remission it can be triggered at any point, often by a stressful event such as moving home, a medical procedure or a fight, so Sammy's immune system is being strengthened with supplements and lots of love to give him the best chance of staying on top of the disease.*

*My experience showed me that prompt diagnosis is crucial, especially as UK vets are inexperienced with this disease; and that awareness needs to be heightened to help prevent, diagnose and correctly treat Leishmaniasis for those dogs unlucky enough to contract it.*



## Book Review

### **ARTHUR The dog who crossed the jungle to find a home, by Deirdre Chitwood**

#### **Introduction**

If you had been surfing the internet in the winter of 2014 you would have surely seen the story of Arthur, the stray dog who befriended a team of adventure racers in the Ecuador jungle.

Arthur is now happily part of Mikael Lindnord's family and living a safe and contented life in Sweden but the story of how they met, their incredible journey together through the jungle and Mikael's subsequent struggle to get Arthur to Sweden makes compelling reading.

#### **Story**

Mikael and his three team mates were part way through an extreme sports race, the Adventure Racing World Championships in Brazil, one of the hardest races in the world, a 435 mile competition that includes trekking, climbing, abseiling, biking and kayaking all through harsh terrain and jungle, crossing mountains and rivers, when he spots a muddy, battered-looking dog. The team had just stopped at a transition area to have a short rest and a much-needed meal including some meat balls. Mikael noticed the dog because he was standing perfectly still despite the frenzy of people rushing around unpacking and packing their gear. There was something different about this dog, Mikael thought; he had a quiet dignity and presence about him that he had never seen in a dog. It is this regal quality that later prompts Mikael to name him Arthur after the legend of King Arthur.

The dog kept looking at Mikael unblinkingly and it was only then that he noticed that some of the mud on his coat was blood and that he had big wounds on his back. Feeling that the dog was obviously in a bad way Mikael decided to give him some of his meat balls. Coming closer he could see that a lot of the mud was in fact dried blood, he had wounds all over him, ears that were in a bad way and he had a smell that was not good. Mikael remembered that Arthur wolfed down the food in one go.

They began the next part of the race in the dark so it was a while before they realized that the dog had followed them. Arthur was determined to go with them and not be left behind. Despite an extremely strenuous hike through knee-high mud slides and dense jungle, a 36-mile kayak ride, illness and fatigue Arthur kept with them until the finishing line.



#### **Make or Break**

My favourite part of the book is where Mikael describes the internal struggle he goes through when reason tells him he must leave the dog behind but knowing that Arthur had put all his hopes for survival on him, his heart won't let him. The next part of the race involves 14 hours of kayaking through mangrove swamps and low lying water. One of his team is injured and the organizers advise them not to take Arthur with them on the boat as it would be unsafe in the water. He knew Arthur was not a good swimmer and with his wounds and the freezing water it would be impossible for him to come with them unless they took him in the boat. Mikael's mind is in turmoil. He knows it is dangerous to take Arthur with them and could damage his team's hopes to win the race yet he feels he is contemplating the greatest betrayal of his life. How could he just leave him there in the middle of the jungle? Arthur is restless, whimpering and whining on the bank as if he can sense what is going to happen. The team have to go. Entering the icy water in the dark in two kayaks, Mikael cannot look behind him yet he is willing Arthur to jump into the water. Then he hears a splash, he knows it is Arthur but has to keep paddling to keep up with the other kayak. Arthur swims as fast as he can, his big head just above the water line but cannot catch them up and begins to drift further behind. It is at this point that Mikael knows he has to make the decision. "If you do this, it's for good," he says to himself. He stops

paddling, waits for Arthur and pulls him, freezing and exhausted into his kayak.

### Big News

Mikael's wife back in Sweden had put news of the team and Arthur on Facebook so when the five of them reached the finishing line plenty of people already knew about Arthur. But the race was only one part of the struggle. Getting Arthur out of Ecuador and into Sweden in just a few days was another big challenge. Fortunately, the huge amount of media exposure that the story attracted helps Mikael to persuade the authorities, and to raise money for the trip and four months quarantine in Sweden. On top of all this Arthur has to endure extensive surgery on his wounds which have parasites crawling inside them one as big as Mikael's thumb, bad teeth which require a specialist vet and a lot of media attention after the surgery, until he is finally reunited with Mikael and his young family in Sweden.

Mikael said of Arthur, "He is a fighter like me and never gives up." Indeed, this is an epic story of real love, hope and incredible endurance which this book review can only give a sense of.

As far as the writing of the book, I personally would have preferred more of the story after Mikael and Arthur meet and less about the race prior to their meeting.

### The Arthur Foundation

*Arthur's rescue was not the only good outcome of this story. Mikael has now established the Arthur Foundation set up to help other dogs like Arthur. In Ecuador most of the dogs are strays. They roam the streets in huge numbers surviving mostly on rubbish. There is no legislation at present to protect animals in South America. There is very little respect for animals and dogs are frequently kicked, shouted at and beaten by the local people mostly due to ignorance.*

*Mikael wants his foundation to help implement long and short term changes by supporting the setting up of rescue centers so that adoptions and sterilization campaigns can be carried out and also to support the campaigning for the immediate adoption of the Law on Animal Welfare.*

The one absolutely unselfish friend that man can have in this selfish world, the one that never deserts him, the one that never proves ungrateful or treacherous, is his dog. He will kiss the hand that has no food to offer; he will lick the wounds and sores that come in encounters with the roughness of the world. When all other friends desert, he remains.

George G Vest



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