# Because Every Dog Should Have Their Day! MAGAZINE

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Summer 2009

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## DEAD DOG BEA CH

~Stacev Thomas

Situated along the southeast coast of Puerto Rico, lies Yabucoa.

The animals abandoned or born on the Yabucoa coast are destined to die a painful death.

On a daily basis animals are being poisoned, beaten or butchered to their demise.

They call this place DEAD DOG BEACH.



5:57 a.m. The soft glow of the morning sun gently caresses the tropical landscape and beckons the musical chorus of the island birds into song for a new day. A blue-green sea sparkles in anticipation as a warm Caribbean breeze dances across its depths while pristine beaches patiently wait for the tourists that will soon dot their white sands. The scurry of crabs keep in time with the percussion of the waves and the skimmers begin their hunt for breakfast. A glorious morning on this tropical paradise unfolds in splendor like clockwork. Here, serenity is packaged into convenient vacation bundles for those eager to escape the hustle and bustle of ordinary life and bask in the bliss of momentary island living. In the indulgence of resort amenities, transfixed by the manufactured island "authenticity", the torturous, agonizing life of an island dog is hidden from plain view. Their cries of terror and pain carried away by the very breeze in which the unknowing find relief and relaxation. The dawn of a new morning is the dawn of another death for the dogs of Dead Dog Beach.



commonly referred to by locals as "La Isla del Encanto", which translated means "The Island of Enchantment." This unincorporated US territory is an island only 100 by 35 miles wide and is home to more than 4 million people. With millions of visitors each year, Puerto Rico is one of the most tourist laden islands in the Caribbean. Her inhabitants seemingly as hospitable as her year round summer weather make living there seem like a paradise fantasy come true. Every year, state-side Americans decide to make this island their home. For two such "state-side transplants", life in Puerto Rico quickly faded from island paradise to a life-long, passionate mission of saving Puerto Rico's discarded inhabitants.

1986. Chris Driscoll was no stranger to living off the beaten path when she arrived in Puerto Rico. As a Spanish major in college, Chris found herself at home in Spanish speaking countries. Having lived in Costa Rico for two years and then Mexico for nine years, life in Puerto Rico was as effortless as crossing the border. It

was Mexico that spawned her rescue career and luckily for the island dogs of Puerto Rico, her experience would give them a new leash on life...or at least a fighting

Playa Lucia -"Dead Dog Beach". On the southeastern border of Puerto Rico, minutes away from the city of Yabucao, is a stretch of beach that bears the marks of its inhabitants tucked away from visitors' view. A long stretch of road leads to the skeleton of what was once a shipping port. A beach strewn with garbage and the stench of death and disregard is home to abandoned, unwanted, sometimes tortured and mutilated dogs and where the story of Amigos de los Animales begins.

With no controlled beach access and no law enforcement, the abandoned port is the backdrop for vandalism, crime, and the dumping ground of dogs by locals. Many of these dogs have been the undeserving recipients of heinous acts of violence. Burnings, amputations, beatings, target practice for both guns and

Located in the northeastern Caribbean, Puerto Rico is

cars are just a few of the unthinkable things that have been delivered by the hands of troubled locals. As maitais and rum runners fill the cups of tourists minutes down the road, the dogs at Dead Dog Beach rely solely on the kindness of strangers to fill their water bowls, give them much needed medical attention, food, and maybe even a forever home. When Chris first arrived at Yabucoa, the conditions at Playa Lucia Beach were incomprehensible. Drawing from her years of rescue experience in Mexico, she immediately set into motion rescue efforts that would eventually become an official organization devoted solely to the welfare of these island dogs.

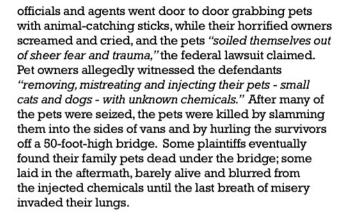
The Problem. The island of Puerto Rico is divided into 78 cities. Even though local laws mandate that each municipality have an animal shelter, only 5 inadequate, understaffed, and poorly equipped shelters exist on the island today. Four animal control agencies are available for "humane euthanasia". However, in November of 2007, the world was outraged as the story of the Puerto Rican Pet Massacre- the ghastly murder of seized

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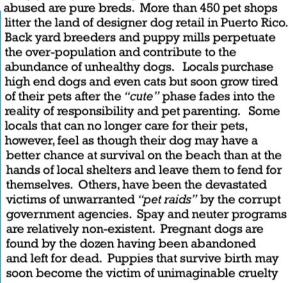
pets being tossed to their deaths off of a city bridge, sent chilling ripples of the realities of their "humane practices". Not a single animal was taken to a shelter after they were seized from their owners hands in order to

implement a new nopet policy in certain public housing developments.





Further investigation uncovered that these methods of killing have gone on for years. An astounding 99% of animals that enter these shelters are in-humanely euthanized by untrained staff, due to overpopulation and illness. The statistic of stray dogs on the island is a staggering estimate of 200,000. More than 90,000 of these dogs enter one of these kill shelters every year. Surprisingly, many of the dogs found abandoned and





















dealt by local teenagers or die a painful death of illness or starvation. The abandoned port is a place of death and dying among the animals left there. Riddled with parasites, heartworm, toxidia, mange, abuse, injuries from inflicted oil burns or being hit by cars, and the effects of starvation and dehydration...the life of an island dog is no life at all.

Governor Fortuno. To say that Peurto Rico lacks any type of animal welfare programs is an understatement of huge proportions. Humane education is virtually non-existent. The majority of children and adults there, are strangers to the most basic respect and care for animal life and see no wrong in neglect or abuse. Disregard is simply a way of life for many, particularly in Yabucoa. Governor Fortuno is not ignorant to the horrific state of affairs for the animal citizens in his country. His offices have been bombarded with letters and phone calls of outcry, both citizens and tourists begging him to help, multiple volunteer organizations offering resources, and yet... he does nothing. In spite of numerous offers of assistance from veterinarians outside of Puerto Rico, Governor Fortuno refuses their help and sites that they are not licensed to practice on his island. As tourism dollars continue to pour into his country, he turns his attention away from the needs of his people and instead focuses on the income that tourism can bring to his island and his pockets. The cycle continues.

Elizabeth Kracht. The move to San Juan, Peurto Rico came in 2005 for Elizabeth. Her animal rescue work began with re-homing local strays and then the rescue and re-homing of a pack of ten dogs and the same for a feral cat colony in Ocean Park. Locals came to know her as a resource for pets that needed homes. A frantic email came to her one day from a man who desperately needed help with 90 dogs that he had been feeding at one of the local beaches. His email detailed horrific conditions and the mutilations and abuse that he had witnessed being done to these dogs. Elizabeth viewed the merciless depictions for herself...the term "Dead Dog Beach" was born.

2006. The Holiday Inn Puerto Rico at the World Society Protection for Animals convention.

It was instant commraderie when Elizabeth and Chris met at the 2006 WSPA Convention in Puerto Rico. Chris, having been doing rescue work on the island for several years, had officially formed Amigos de los Animales in 2005. Joining forces to rescue the dogs at Dead Dog Beach was a no-brainer. Their vigilance, passion, and smarts have made a drastic difference for the dogs of Puerto Rico. Chris Driscoll and Liz Kracht have truly made a difference The Work of Amigos de los Animales. (ADLA) A gentle hand. A bowl of water and a good meal. Veterinary care. A chance at a life full of love. A ticket to freedom. A voice of passion and determination. These are merely glimpses of the work being done by ADLA. Since its inception and partnership with stateside rescues, more than 1000 dogs have been flown to safety in the Unites States. Amigos de los Animales

often works with tourists interested in taking stray animals home. They go the extra mile to help tourists who want to help give a "sato" (Puerto Rican for Mutt) a loving forever home. Because Puerto Rico is considered a Commonwealth of the United States, animal travel from Puerto Rico to the Continental U.S. is considered State to State travel. All that is needed is a travel certificate in order to fly your newfound sato home!

Through collaborations with the few veterinarians in Puerto Rico that are willing to help. ADLA has been able to provide medical care to many of the dogs living on Playa Lucia because of donations and support from people like yourself. Dr. Rafael Ramos Montanez of Clinica de Diego has been a major contributor to the health and well being of the dogs on the island. His more than twelve years of work with ADLA have significantly improved the chances of survival for the dogs that find themselves in his care and successfully re-homing them to loving families. While their work has greatly impacted the lives of the dogs that arrive on the Playa Lucia, abandoned and abused, the problem has much deeper roots that ADLA is working to change. Cooperation and collaboration with the several other rescue groups on the island is key to a winning situation for the dogs of Puerto Rico. Establishing humane education and instilling in the community a respect for life is a critical component. Achieving a working relationship with the Puerto Rican government is paramount to the permanent wellbeing of animals on the island. Educating tourists on how they can help is another area of great importance. A spay and neuter program is absolutely essential in order to minimize the overwhelming population of animals on the streets and to significantly reduce the euthanasia numbers. The need for a mobile spay and neuter clinic is one requiring finances beyond ADLA's reach. Approximately \$200k dollars in sponsorship donations is necessary to see this project to fruition followed by continued support to keep it running. An ongoing sponsorship of island dogs medical care is an everyday need that must be met in order to continue this life saving work. The work of ADLA has paved a way for change but the journey is far from over. Driscoll and Kracht and their team of volunteers make a decision every single day to stand and fight for change. Every day they must be the voice for those who cannot speak. A voice for those who suffer at the hands of ignorance and dismissal from a corrupt government. A steadfast source of compassion, care, and a determined will to fight for those most deserving of a chance for a new life....a dog's life.

It's 5:57 a.m. The soft fingers of sunlight gently caress a new day into song. A blue-green sea sparkles in anticipation and the warm winds of the Caribbean dance across her depths. The scurry of crabs keep rhythm with the percussion of the waves and the skimmers begin their hunt for breakfast. The splendor of life unfolds like clockwork... and yet again gives you the opportunity to make a difference today.

www.amigosdelosanimalespr.org

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T hink Outside the Box

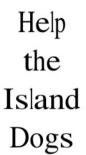


Educate the Ignorant



the Island









Nina and Nicole were the unlikely pair of a purebred Rottweiler and a purebred German Shepherd living together in the jungle overgrowth at "Dead Dog Beach." When Nina and Nicole were discovered, they could barely stand, and both dogs looked like they might have been suffering from elephantiasis. Resident "Dead Dog Beach" dog caretakers kept Nina and Nicole alive through routine feeding and medication, and kept them away from the other dogs because both needed all their strength for survival. In late October of 2006, Nina and Nicole were rescued from the beach and were taken to a veterinarian where they would remain for about 3 months for treatment of mange, fungus, parasites, starvation, an more. Miraculously, neither dog had heartworm, and when they were ready for adoption, Nina and Nicole were rescued yet again and now live happy lives with their new adopted families.

Jess was dumped at "Dead Dog Beach" after having hot oil thrown on him. Resident dog caretaker at the beach aided Jess as best he could by stitching his open wound with a needle and thread - a wound where the oil had penetrated so deeply that bone material was visible. Somehow Jess managed to thrive at the beach despite his circumstance and wound. Jess was then rescued, but the difficulty of placing him began. Four months passed before Jess found his forever family, but he is now famous in his community, he attends baseball games, sleeps on the couch, has a cat for a buddy, and recently had his first-ever camping trip. Jess's new guardian Kym says that adopting Jess was the best last minute decision she's ever made, and says she gets at least 20 emails a day asking how Jess is doing.

## **RECAP & MORE!**

### DID YOU KNOW? **PUERTO RICO IS A UNITED STATES** TERRITORY!!

There is an estimated 100,000-200,000 dogs roaming the streets and beaches, either born into homelessness, abandoned or abused.

On an island the size of Connecticut, Puerto Rico has 78 cities. While each city is required by law to have an animal shelter, there are currently 5 small, unequipped, and under funded shelters on the island. There are also only 4 control agencies available for "humane euthanasia."

It is estimated that 90% of animals entering these shelters are euthanized because of overpopulation and illness.

There is an estimated 450 "pet shops" selling unhealthy, uncertified and poorly kept animals. Many of these shops are illegally vaccinating and treating dogs. Most pets will find the streets their home when they graduate from their "cute stage."

It is estimated that less then 10% of the pet population ever visit a veterinarian clinic.

### THE DYNAMICS OF DEAD DOG BEACH

Location: South east coast of Yabucoa, directly across from a major Shell Oil Plant. An old shipping port exists where many of the dogs find shade from the sun. Unfortunately, the port is still used by locals to train dogs such as pit bulls. Locals chain dogs to the old dock polls and force their dogs to tread water...sometimes for hours. Because of these incidences, the port is not a safe place for the dogs to rest.

Safety: There is NO controlled beach access, which means anyone can enter the beach at any time and perform any type of activity. There is NO law enforcement at the beach and seldom come when called.

Food & Water: Volunteers feed the dogs daily, and give fresh water. There is no other access to clean drinking water, except what the volunteers provide. Your donations help fund the food given to the dogs.

Medications: Medications are given on the beach when necessary. Dogs are treated for heartworm, mange, infections, etc. Your donations help fund the medications given to the dogs.

### WANT TO HELP?

Island Dog rescue organizations run solely on YOUR donations. They do not receive government funding. They are recognized by the United States government as 501(c)(3) organizations, which means your donations are tax deductible! With your help they can end animal cruelty in Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands. YOUR generous donations are creating spay/neuter clinics, educational centers, and providing rehabilitation services for animals who have been emotionally and physically abused.

Each donation is a contribution to an historical effort to give animals in the United States Caribbean humane rights. By making a donation they get one step closer to building responsible pet ownership cultures in the islands.

Visit these websites for more information: www.amigosdelosanimalespr.org www.islanddog.org/aboutus/deaddogbeach.html www.manosporpatas.org www.saveasato.org

### CAN'T MAKE IT TO THE PUERTO RICO TO RESCUE A DOG?

This Florida shelter has adoptable Island Dogs! Animal Rescue Force of South Florida, Inc. P.O. Box 213072 Royal Palm Beach, Fl 33421 (561) 784-8788 www.animalrescueforce.org

### WHY NOT WRITE A LETTER SHARING YOUR THOUGHTS?

Tourism Office Puerto Rico Main Office La Princesa Bldg. #2 Paseo La Princesa Old San Juan, P.R. 00902

### ARE YOU IN SCHOOL AND WANT TO HELP DOGS?

You can help the Caribbean Dogs and dogs in United States Shelters by participating in the "Kids Helping Kids Program." This program is designed to help you put humane education (an educationsl newsletter called KIND NEWS) into schools in the Caribbean and the United States. By helping them raise funds to teach children to respect animals and the environment, you are helping change the face of animal cruelty throughout the United States and the Caribbean Islands. Kind News costs \$30.00 a classroom per year. Start a collection in your school. Ask everyone in your classroom or grade to donate \$2.00 to the program. Their \$2.00 donation will go toward putting Kind News in YOUR school and a needy school in the United States Caribbean.

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