VSA Assignment Description

Assignment Title	Veterinarian or Veterinary Technician or Veterinary Nurse
Country	Tonga
Location of Partner Organisation	Tongatapu
Partner Organisation	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (MAFF) and Tonga Animal Welfare Society (TAWS)
Duration	3 months – 2 years, depending on availability of candidate
Sustainable Development Goals	

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1. Partner organisation overview

Livestock Division, Ministry of Agriculture Food and Forestry (MAFF)
Alongside the veterinary clinic, the Livestock Division's responsibilities include:

- Effective development of commercial livestock production and management of animal health services
- To improve and expand livestock productions and stakeholder partnerships
- To improve veterinary services including disease surveillance
- To improve preparedness for effective response to food and animal threats and emergencies
- Improved, sustainable livestock production
- Improved food security

Tasks include:

- A de-sexing programme for dogs in order to maintain the numbers at a manageable level
- Quarantine, management and care of animals imported from overseas, ensuring that animals are free from zoonotic diseases
- Visiting the outlying islands yearly or when needed, to train staff and owners on animal care and management
- Setting up a local organization to protect and prevent cruelty to animals.
- Seeking funding from overseas organizations (and from the government) to help with care of animals
- Helping to enforce animal legislations so that animal owners are responsible for any damage done by their animals to properties and gardens.

The Tonga Animal Welfare Society (TAWS) was established in 2020 by a group of residents who came together to become the voice for animal welfare in Tonga, and to help support the community with challenges they face when it comes to animal care.
The organisation is now a registered NGO, with each of the volunteer Board members giving their time to the operation and logistics of the organisation, and also to animal rescue and welfare.
TAWS aims to unite, educate, and support the community in all areas of animal welfare.
TAWS works with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests (MAFF), South Pacific Animal Welfare (SPAW), and the community to assist with animal care. In the absence of a qualified vet in Tonga, this means a lot of hands-on work, doing preventative and post injury assistance. None of the Board members are trained in Veterinary services but they do the best they can with the knowledge that they have.

2. Assignment overview

There has been no trained veterinarian in Tonga since the departure of the last veterinarian, VSA volunteer Dr Kerry Killorn in 2017.
There is currently no-one trained to carry out correct treatment and surgery of animals in Tonga, and no-one able to order or administer life-saving drugs, or drugs necessary for animal surgery.
There is a vet nurse who has trained for one year in New Zealand, but has not as yet reached registration status.

Prior to COVID, the South Pacific Animal Welfare (SPAW) visited Tonga four times per year, for one to two weeks at a time, providing de-sexing programmes and some animal surgery.

The MAFF livestock Division wishes to establish a veterinary staff succession plan where students could be sent to study veterinary services overseas. Ideally, there should be two or three trained veterinarians to cover the main island and two of the outlying islands. The need for continuity of veterinary staff is of the utmost importance.

The knowledge and working experience of a trained veterinarian would greatly reduce suffering to animals, and stress to inexperienced staff who are entrusted with the responsibility of having to operate on animals with little chance of success.

A VSA volunteer would also train TAWS volunteers who are carrying out essential animal welfare tasks in Tonga. The training would include First Aid for animals, the steps to take when an animal is injured, and minor animal surgery and wound care.

3. Goal/outcomes/outputs

Goal
Veterinary staff are skilled and confident in their provision of services[1] for the wellbeing of animals in Tonga, with opportunities for young staff and TAWS community volunteers to be trained and mentored in Tonga.

Outcome 1
Local capacity and knowledge of current MAFF Livestock Division staff and TAWS Board members and volunteers is strengthened.

- Assess current levels of knowledge amongst staff and volunteers, particularly in the areas of animal welfare and surgery
- Identify gaps in knowledge
- Alongside the CEO of the Livestock Division, develop a professional development plan for staff and volunteers
- Train and mentor current staff and volunteers
- Work with local staff to develop a veterinary succession plan to assist with the training and retention of local staff

Outcome 2

MAFF Livestock Division staff have improved access to, and knowledge of, essential drugs required for surgery and animal welfare.

- Assess current processes for drug acquisition, storage and use
- Work with the CEO of the Livestock Division to assess the drug types and quantities needed
- Work with local staff to develop a sustainable plan to ensure the necessary drugs for animal surgery and the treatment of animal ailments are accessible when needed

Outcome 3

Owners and community members have increased awareness and knowledge of key animal welfare principles.

Work with MAFF staff and TAWS volunteers to develop owner awareness programmes which:
- Educate owners about food, care and exercise for their animals
- Encourage and facilitate de-sexing programmes for domestic animals
- Demonstrate the use of cheap, well designed kennels for housing dogs within their properties

[1] Including the provision of support to animal owners and livestock staff about appropriate care of animals.

- Empower owners to seek medical care when animals are sick or wounded, so that suffering is minimised

4. Reporting and working relationships and capacity building

The volunteer will report directly to, and will be accountable to the CEO of the MAFF Livestock Division. On a day-to-day basis, the volunteer will predominately work the field staff within the Livestock Division, with TAWS volunteers, and with local animal and livestock owners.

The volunteer, MAFF, and TAWS will have an ongoing relationship with the VSA programme manager in terms of assignment monitoring, reporting, professional advice and personal support.

As needs on the ground may change over time, the volunteer is encouraged to review and update the Assignment Description on arrival in consultation with the partner organisation and VSA Programme Manager. By their very nature, development situations can involve significant change, so it is advisable that the volunteer periodically review and reflect on the Assignment Description throughout the Assignment to ensure the best development outcomes are being achieved.

5. Selection criteria/position requirements

Person specifications (professional)

Essential

- Qualified and licenced veterinarian or veterinary technician or veterinary nurse
- Certified to order and administer drugs
- Experience in training and mentoring
- Ability to provide technical advice
- Dedication, compassion and love of animals

Personal specification (personal)

Essential

- Approachable, straight forward and kind
- Clear and concise presentation of advice
- Interested in Tongan culture and willing to learn about different cultural practices

6. VSA Essential Attributes

- Commitment to volunteering, to VSA and to the partner organisation
- Cross cultural awareness
- Adaptability and a willingness to approach change or newness positively
- Able to form good relationships, both personally and professionally, with work colleagues and in the community
- Resilience and an ability to manage setbacks
- Initiative and resourcefulness
- An ability to facilitate learning through skills exchange

7. Country Context

For more information about the Tonga, see https://vsa.org.nz/about-vsa/countryregion/tonga

Additional information

Residency status
VSA volunteers must be New Zealand citizens or have New Zealand permanent residency status, and currently living in NZ.

Pre-departure briefing
As part of the volunteer's contract, successful candidates will be required to take part in a pre-departure briefing course run by VSA in Wellington and complete all required pre-reading.

Final appointment
Final appointment will be subject to satisfactory medical and immigration clearances (costs covered by VSA), partner organisation acceptance, and successful completion of the pre-departure briefing course.

Family status
VSA supports partners to accompany volunteers on assignments of six months or longer. However volunteers with accompanying dependents will not be considered for this assignment.

Fundraising
Volunteers are encouraged to fundraise at least $1000 with the support of VSA's fundraising team. Accompanying partners are encouraged to raise the same amount. All funds raised will help VSA keep its programmes in action and support future volunteers.

Vaccination requirements
Potential volunteers are advised that VSA's insurers require volunteers to be inoculated, prior to departure, in accordance with the instructions of VSA's medical adviser. VSA covers the cost of any required vaccinations.

Children's Act
While on assignment, VSA volunteers may be required to work with children and/or may choose to participate in informal activities in their own time that involve interactions with children (such as coaching teams or teaching English). VSA is committed to the protection of vulnerable children and adults, which also includes meeting our commitment under the Children's Act 2014.

The information requested during the application process is necessary to assist VSA to determine applicant suitability to work and/or interact regularly with children, and is part of a series of pre-selection checks undertaken on all applicants for VSA assignments.

Volunteer package
The volunteer's package includes the following:

Reimbursements and grants
Reimbursements and grants will be determined based on the length of time which the volunteer is available, and will be discussed with prospective candidates at the time of their application.

Accommodation
Basic, comfortable furnished accommodation will be sourced by VSA. In some circumstances volunteers may be asked to share accommodation.

Airfares and baggage allowance
VSA will provide the volunteer with economy airfares to and from New Zealand for their assignment plus a baggage allowance.

Insurance
VSA will provide travel insurance to cover baggage and personal property, and non-routine medical expenses for the duration of the assignment. Further details of the insurance cover will be provided during the volunteer pre-departure briefing.

Utilities

VSA will reimburse volunteers reasonable expenses for household utilities while on assignment.

Final terms and conditions relating to the specific volunteer assignment will be confirmed in a personalised volunteer contract.