



**ASSOCIAÇÃO NERINA DE APOIO AOS ANIMAIS
& ASSOCIAZIONE NERINA SVIZZERA - BOA VISTA**



Dear friends of Nerina,

At this time of year, we feel the need to pause for a moment, take a breath and look back.

And what we see are not just numbers or statistics. They are stories. Stories of frightened eyes that, little by little, have begun to trust again. Stories of vulnerable animals that have found care, warmth and a new lease of life. Stories that, together with you, we write day after day.

All this is possible thanks to your support. Thank you for continuing to believe in us and for giving us the opportunity to make a difference.

Today we'd like to tell you a little about our life here on Boa Vista. We'd like to share with you the achievements of these past years' work, even though it's not always easy to describe what we experience every day. We'll give it a go, in the hope of conveying to you at least some of the emotions, difficulties and rewards that come with our work.

Our day begins early, with the distribution of food. Then we start treating our patients. At any given time, we have a dozen patients – sick and injured animals – each with a different story and different needs. Not all of them are cooperative, and that's perfectly normal.

When the clock strikes nine, whilst the cleaning of the dog and cat kennels and other daily tasks continue at the shelter, the stream of outpatients begins at the clinic. Some people bring their dog or cat in for neutering, others arrive with an animal injured in an accident, and others turn up with a seriously ill animal, often already on the brink of death.

We turn no one away. Unfortunately.

A few months ago, Jubbe came to us. His owner rang us late one Sunday afternoon, in despair. That morning, someone had stabbed his dog outside their home. Wounded and terrified, Jubbe had run away. It was only many hours later that he managed to find him and bring him to us. Upon shaving the fur around the wound, we discovered that the knife blade had snapped and remained lodged in his back. After stabilising Jubbe, we carried out diagnostic tests to determine which organs had been affected. Fortunately, the blade had not caused any internal injuries. With extreme care, we managed to remove it, dressed the wound and immediately started him on a course of antibiotics and painkillers. The following hours were crucial. Jubbe remained in our clinic for several days, under constant observation.

In the end, he pulled through. He is now back, running about lively and happy through the streets of Sal Rei with his owner.





For us, Jubbe is not just a dog who survived an act of unprecedented violence. He is a symbol of what we are now able to achieve. Ten years ago, a case like his would have had very little chance of survival. Today, thanks to the clinic, the equipment, the expertise and the support of those close to us, we can offer these animals a chance that simply did not exist back then.

Back then, there was only João Lopes da Silva, the local vet, an employee of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment, who, once his working hours were over, from 4 pm onwards, tried to do everything he could with the resources at his disposal. The situation was extremely difficult.

Whilst we often clashed with him at the start – particularly when faced with the most complex cases – today we have a better understanding of the difficulties he faced. His caution has not entirely disappeared, but over time we have built a relationship based on mutual trust and collaboration.

Some people criticise us for taking this approach. We can only reply that we do not work to win everyone's approval. We work to save as many lives as possible. To give you an idea of how much this collaboration has grown, we would like to share two stories that are of great significance to us.

The first concerns the long-awaited law on pitbulls. João was tasked by the Veterinary Association with overseeing the drafting of this important legislation, intended to regulate a sensitive issue for Cape Verdean society. Over the coming months, we will have the opportunity to analyse it together, examine it in depth and discuss it with a legal expert who has long supported our association.

The second story filled us with pride. Whilst our brilliant vet Steffi was away, we managed to persuade João to carry out an orthopaedic operation. Our support was limited to managing the anaesthesia: he decided and carried out everything else himself. He chose the surgical approach, prepared the equipment, planned the procedure and performed the operation. It all went very well. We left the operating theatre tired, but deeply satisfied and happy. We know that this experience has given him greater confidence and belief in his own abilities.

And this is precisely one of the goals we set ourselves from day one: not only to treat the animals, but to pass on skills, foster self-reliance and build, step by step, a future in which the animals of Boa Vista can rely more and more on local resources.

But the collaboration we have built up over the years is not the only change we have seen.





To truly understand how much Boa Vista has changed, it is worth broadening our perspective to the entire Cape Verde archipelago. As you know, Cape Verde consists of ten islands, nine of which are inhabited. Boa Vista is situated amongst some of the most populous islands: São Vicente, with around 95,000 inhabitants; Sal, with around 35,000; and Santiago, the largest, with around 285,000 residents. The population figures are necessarily approximate, but they are sufficient to help us understand the scale of the situation. Using the ratio of human to dog population employed by the UN and the WHO, we can estimate that there are over 19,000 dogs on São Vicente, around 7,000 on Sal and over 57,000 on Santiago. Applying the same criterion, Boa Vista, with its approximately 17,000 inhabitants, should be home to around 3,500 dogs. When we arrived in 2015, that estimate was very close to reality. To our eyes, there were between 3,000 and 3,500 dogs on the island.

Today, however, we estimate that there are between 850 and 900 left.

This is no coincidence. It is the result of years of neutering campaigns, carried out with consistency, patience and determination. It is concrete proof that sustained action can profoundly change the reality of a region.

It would be simplistic to say that this change is due solely to sterilisation. Over the years, many animals have died of old age, illness, road accidents and, sadly, also as a result of poisoning – a practice that remains a grim reality even today.

But without birth control, those figures would have been very different indeed.

With the results achieved over recent years, we can finally say that we have achieved one of our association's most important objectives: to reduce avoidable suffering.

Today, thanks to the dramatic decline in the dog population and the support we continue to receive, we can focus our energy and resources on the animals still living on the island. We are talking about around a thousand dogs and cats who, just like Jubbe, can count on prompt care, appropriate surgery, ongoing medical treatment and a level of support that, ten years ago, would simply have been unthinkable.

This does not mean that emergencies are a thing of the past. It does, however, mean that today we have the tools, expertise and organisation needed to offer every animal that comes to us the best possible chance of treatment and recovery.

And this is perhaps the greatest change of all: no longer having to chase after a never-ending stream of emergencies, but being able to truly treat, save and support every life with the dignity it deserves.

When we look back, we don't just see thousands fewer dogs on the streets of Boa Vista. We see thousands of cases of suffering averted, people who now work alongside us, and a community that, little by little, is changing its relationship with animals.

There is still a long way to go. But every step we have taken has been made possible by those who have chosen to walk this path with us.

Before we say goodbye, we would like to dedicate a special thought to Antonio.

Antonio loved animals deeply. Although he had never met us in person, he had chosen to support our work and what we strive to build here in Boa Vista every day. After his passing, due to cancer, he left his colleagues with a simple yet precious wish: that each of them, according to their means, should make a donation for the animals of Boa Vista. That gesture moved us deeply.

Among those colleagues was also someone we had met many years ago right here in Boa Vista. We still remember his astonishment when, whilst out walking, he asked us: 'What are you doing with five dogs?'. At the time, our project was only just getting off the ground. Today, those five dogs have grown into hundreds of lives saved, thousands of sterilisations, and an organisation that continues to grow thanks to the support of people like Antonio and his friends.

To all of them go our most sincere thanks. For the generosity they have shown, for choosing to turn a moment of grief into a gesture of hope, and for choosing to continue walking alongside us.

For this reason, once again, we simply want to say two words to you.

Thank you.

With infinite gratitude,

Nerina Association



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