



This Christmas I spent a month working at an animal hospital and rescue centre called the 'Tree of Life for Animals', (TOLFA).

TOLFA is situated near Ajmer, in the state of Rajasthan in Northern India. I was one of four Cambridge vet students who went out to volunteer there during December. We used our skills to help with the daily treatments of stray dogs, puppies and farm animals which were being kept in the clinic during their recovery. We also enjoyed helping to run the popular 'Goat Clinic' which was set up to provide local farmers with free treatments for their farm animals. Here we were able to make a difference by treating various common ailments such as mastitis, parasitic infections, broken bones, wound management and neonatal problems.

One of the best parts of our stay was being able to develop our surgical skills by helping with the neutering operations on stray dogs. One of TOLFA's main aims is running the 'Animal Birth Control and rabies vaccination programme'. Dog sterilisation is the only humane way of reducing the numbers of stray dogs on the streets. Sterilisation is vital both to maintain good welfare standards among the stray dog population and also, alongside rabies vaccinations, to reduce the prevalence of rabies amongst street dogs. India has one of the highest counts in the world of humans dying from Rabies.

In the surgery we learnt the basic procedures for castration, spaying and various suturing patterns. We were also involved in anaesthetic monitoring where we were able to practice valuable skills such as intravenous catheterisation, administering fluid therapy and providing pain relief.

All in all TOLFA was a really enjoyable experience. I feel that I benefited immensely from the clinical hands on experience we had, and also got to fully experience the lifestyle of rural India. I would recommend it to any vet student!