

Worldwide Veterinary Services International Training Centre

BY ARNOLD PLOTNICK, DVM

There is no shortage of stray cats and dogs in Thailand and, like all street animals, they need looking after. Doing his fair share is Dr. Giacomo Miglio, clinical director at the Worldwide Veterinary Service's International Training Centre (ITC), in Chiang Mai. With a staff of four talented veterinarians and several proficient veterinary nurses and assistants, the ITC has earned an excellent reputation for its care of Chiang Mai's cat and dog population.

The Centre plays an important community role, including sterilizing and treating sick and injured dogs and cats from across Chiang Mai, running outreach projects in the local villages, and training veterinarians and veterinary students from all over the world.

Last October, I met Ian Clarke, the ITC's director of operations, where he learned of my expertise in (and great fondness for) cats. We discussed the possibility of my participation in a future feline spay/neuter project. My trip to Thailand happened early March 2019. At the ITC, I met Dr. Miglio and was given a tour of their clinic, dog shelter and surgery area. Spaying and neutering constitutes a large part of what the center does, as evidenced by the six operating tables in the surgery suite.

Local cat rescue groups in Chiang Mai are always overrun with cats in need. They were notified of this sterilization project in advance, and they gratefully supplied us with cats. After a desperately needed good night's sleep (my flight to Thailand lasted nearly 20 hours), I arrived at the center early the next morning, rested and ready.

The surgery suite was already abuzz. Technicians and assistants worked together in perfect coordination, anesthetizing, shaving and prepping the cats for their procedures. One of the technicians connected his cellphone to a Bluetooth speaker, and as the room filled with the sound of Thai pop (and, to my surprise, American country) music, the sterilizations commenced. Like a well-choreographed ballet, cats were brought to the operating tables, sterilized, taken to the recovery area, and new cats were brought in. Before you could blink, a dozen cats were peacefully sleeping off their anesthetic under the watchful eye of a technician.

As part of my visit, I had agreed to give a slide presentation to the doctors on staff. I spoke about some common feline conditions (diabetes, hyperthyroidism, kidney disease, inflammatory bowel disease), and I also presented

Learn more about
World Veterinary Service's
amazing work
at wvs.org.uk.



A technician retrieves a cat for sterilization (left); Dr. Plotnick with a sedated cat who's ready to be spayed (above).

photos of my more memorable cases from my feline-only practice in New York City. The differences between what I might encounter daily in my urban, western practice and what these veterinarians see and experience in rural Chiang Mai couldn't be any more stark, and it provoked a fun and stimulating discussion.

The Worldwide Veterinary Service sponsors dozens of international projects every year, treating cats, dogs, horses, donkeys and all manner of wildlife. This was my second international project with them, but certainly not my last. I've formed lasting friendships with dedicated, like-minded people, and the satisfaction derived from helping care for these animals in need is immeasurable. 🐾



Dr. Arnold Plotnick is the founder of Manhattan Cat Specialists, a feline-exclusive veterinary practice on Manhattan's upper west side. Dr. Plotnick is a frequent contributor to feline publications and websites, including his own blog Cat Man Do. He lives in New York City with his cats Mittens and Glitter.