



# A Humane Crisis of Cyclone Proportions



Photo: WSPA

With the loss of 48 million working animals, thousands of hectares of land will be left unploughed, leaving millions of people at risk of economic ruin and starvation.

Their Disaster Assessment and Response Team (DART) entered the Delta on May 31 with the first shipment of emergency animal feed. They reached Laputta where the community had lost 90 per cent of its animals.

"The impact on communities even four weeks after the event is overwhelming," said Dr. Ian Dacre, DART leader. "We have 30 tonnes of emergency feed. But it's a drop in



Photo: WSPA

WSPA's Disaster Assessment Response Team entered the Irrawaddy Delta of Myanmar on May 31st with the first shipment of emergency animal feed. By the second week of June, a total of 120 tonnes of food had been distributed to 4600 animals left starving when cyclone Nargis hit the Delta on May 3rd.

the ocean. We need a lot more than that."

WSPA estimates that as many as 48 million working animals needed to plough the rice fields in the coming year may have been wiped out. With their loss, thousands of hectares of land will be left unploughed, leaving millions of people at risk of economic ruin and starvation. The organization is working with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to ensure that the desperately needed feed gets to the animals in need. While the villagers rely on water buffalo and cattle for work in the rice fields, some equines such as donkeys are valued in the villages.

By the second week of June, 120 tonnes of food had been distributed to 4,600 animals. And it was still just a drop in the ocean.

For the surviving animals in the severely affected areas of the Delta, there is very little natural food. Much of it was at first contaminated

with marine water. The monsoon rains cleaned some but much of it is rotting. Starving animals will eat anything including water reeds and banana tree cuttings but they will extract very little nourishment.

A huge problem is disease. High levels of parasites have contaminated the vegetation which will lead to animals suffering from tape, hook, and round worms as well as liver fluke. Rotting carcasses are contaminating ground water. Stressed and starving animals will abort young or have stillbirths. Cows will have vastly reduced milk yields or no milk at all.

"Some \$10,000 US has been spent on veterinary medicines to date," stated Michelle Cliffe, communications manager, in early June. "Some animals are suffering from pneumonia and there are several cases of diarrhoea. We have not confirmed whether this is

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Photo: WSPA

\$5 will buy feed for a goat for a week; \$20 will buy feed for one milking buffalo or cow for a week; \$40 ensures all the animals of one family are fed for a week.

**Myanmar**  
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due to infectious diseases or increased intake of salt water which many animals still have to drink. Hemorrhagic septicaemia, foot and mouth disease, and sporadic cases of anthrax have also been reported.”

The scale of the emergency is daunting. WSPA has partnered with Humane Society International and three HSI field veterinarians have joined WSPA's five veterinarians. Four emergency animal health centres have been set up in each of the four sectors of the most severely affected area of the Delta and a steady stream of emergency feed will continue to be airlifted into the area. From the moment the cyclone hit, it was a certainty that the impact on livestock would be overwhelming. Like millions in third world countries, people depend on their animals not

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only for food and milk but also for planting, harvesting, and taking goods to market.

“Animal welfare is critical to the progress and social development of a nation and its people,” said Leah Garces, WSPA director of campaigns, UK. “In changing a society's perception and treatment of animals, you can change much more than just animal welfare. You can change a society's ability to have compassion, to reach out to the voiceless and helpless and to empathize. The benefits of such a change are tremendously far-reaching.”

WSPA is appealing for funds to help starving animals, prevent the spread of disease, and alleviate suffering. A small amount can do

so much. For instance, \$5 will buy feed for a goat for a week; \$20 will buy feed for one milking buffalo or cow for a week; \$40 ensures all the animals of one family are fed for a week; \$100 will pay for anti-parasite treatment for 200 animals; and \$500 will pay for the cost of veterinary supplies and medical care for 250 animals.

**If you would like to help WSPA help the livestock and their owners in Myanmar, please visit their website at [www.wspa.ca](http://www.wspa.ca) or send a donation to the World Society for the Protection of Animals, 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 960, Toronto, Ontario, M4P 2Y3.**

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