

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

VET STUDENTS AID EL SALVADORAN FARMERS

Two veterinary students opted for an unusual holiday break this year—they spent ten days as volunteers in El Salvador teaching members of a women's farming cooperative how to manage the health of cattle. The animals are being raised as part of an agricultural development program.

The two, Gustavo Soberano ('03) and Sarah Schroer ('03), along with fellow student volunteers Fauna Smith ('05) and Masae Suda ('04), are developing a concept they call Veterinary Assistance and International Development, or Vet AID. "This is our initial project," says Mr. Soberano.

"The SHARE Foundation of San Francisco contacted us to see if we would donate veterinary first aid kits," he says. The foundation sponsors the Marta Gonzales Women's Cattle Cooperative located in Jiquilisco, in the eastern province of Usulután. In addition to the requested supplies, the students decided on a more long-lasting contribution—their time.



Below: Veterinary students Sarah Schroer and Gustavo Soberano demonstrate, to several members of a women's agricultural cooperative in El Salvador, how to safely restrain and examine an animal.

Left: One of the farmers (center) dons a stethoscope as Mr. Soberano demonstrates to the group how to do a basic health check when purchasing calves.

The students have experience with foreign languages and international settings—Ms. Schroer served in the Peace Corps; Mr. Soberano, a native of Mexico, has lived in El Salvador and worked with other agricultural cooperatives; Ms. Suda's special interest is Africa, where she once lived; and Ms. Smith has experience with food animals.

In August 2002, Smith traveled to El Salvador to meet with members of the cooperative. The 200 women, mostly war widows and single mothers, purchase calves with loans, which are repaid when the calves are raised and sold. They are most interested in learning how to recognize disease in their animals and perform some simple procedures.

In December, Soberano and Schroer taught members of the cooperative how to recognize signs of poor health in cattle, safely restrain their animals, give injections, and castrate bulls using a Burdizzo clamp. With veterinary

care up to 90 minutes away, these kinds of skills are essential to the ongoing success of the calf-rearing program.

After the seminar, says Soberano, "We gave them 'homework'—the women went in groups of three to observe animals in the local market, and came back able to give reasons pro and con whether to purchase them." Schroer and Soberano also examined some sick animals and collected serum samples for analysis to find out which diseases are most prevalent in the region.

Schroer says the group is planning additional seminars on recognizing common diseases, basic obstetrics, and treatment of common conditions. "We are raising funds for construction of a community cattle chute and collecting donated products for the establishment of a community livestock pharmacy." Several more students have expressed interest in the next visit to El Salvador, scheduled for June.

Veterinary Medicine News is published by the University of California, Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine; Bennie I. Osburn, DVM, PhD, *Dean*; Donald J. Klingborg, DVM, *Associate Dean for Public Programs*; Susan Donahue, *Editor*; Lynn Narlesky and UC Davis News Service, *Contributing Writers*; Marianne Post, *Design Consultant*. *The University of California does not discriminate in any of its policies, procedures or practices. The university is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer.*

Veterinary Medicine
NEWS



Office of Public Programs (1409)
School of Veterinary Medicine
University of California
One Shields Avenue
Davis CA 95616-8736

ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
UC Davis