



CARE FOR COWS

IN VRINDAVAN

May 2006



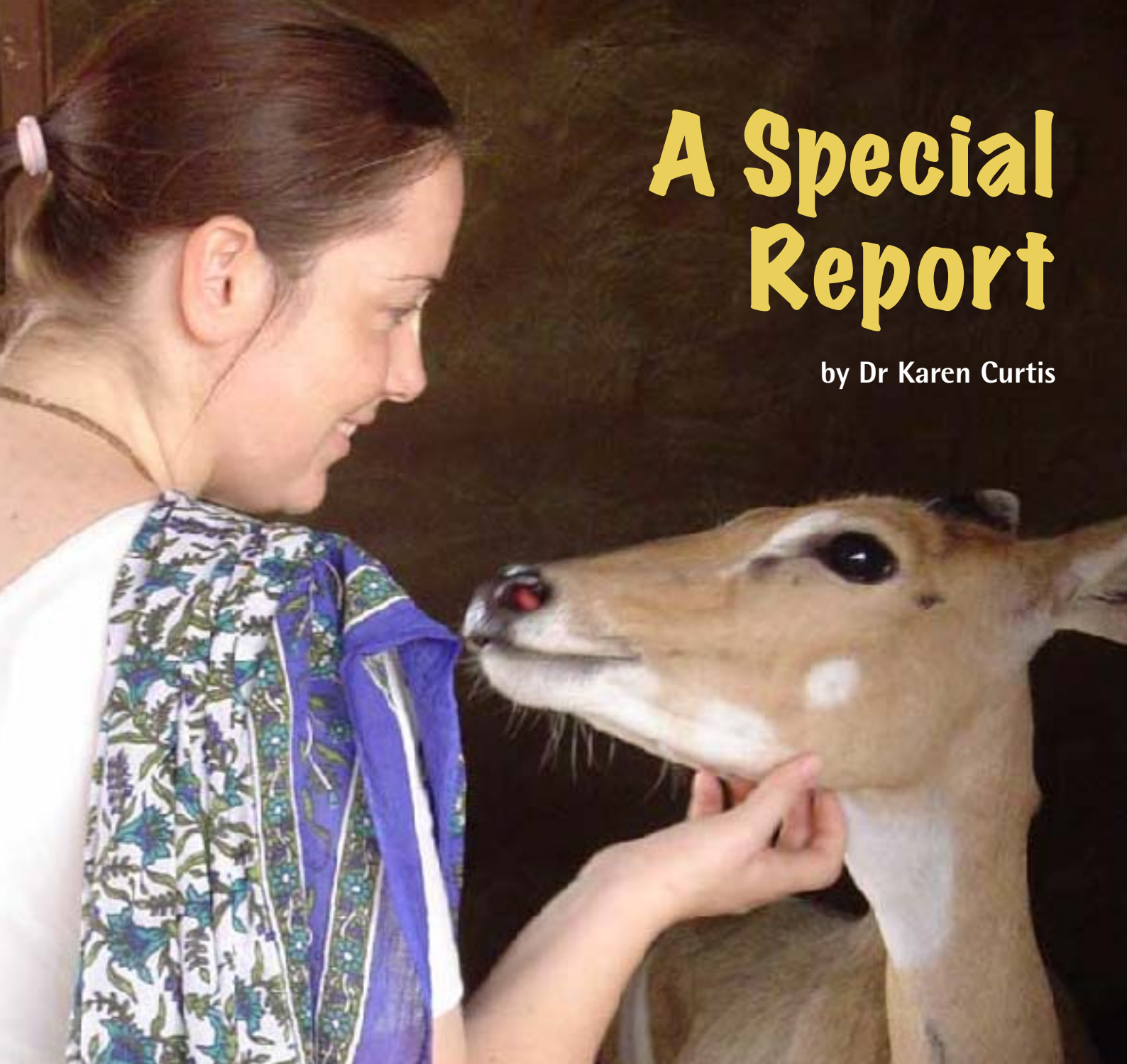
**Wound Care
for Cows**

**Van Krishna's Trial
a Special Report**

**Aussie
Vet at CFC**

A Special Report

by Dr Karen Curtis



Van Krishna's Trial



Van Krishna, a one month old bambi at Care for Cows



Van Krishna cuddling a favorite calf



Now 8 months old, Van Krishna still drinks cows milk

I am sitting next to the sweetest creature, watching him placidly eating the pipul leaves gathered for him. Van Krishna's gentle liquid brown eyes seem to gaze upon me with steady curiosity, and they give away none of the pain that has been so prominent in his life up to this point.

Occasionally he will turn to look at his stump, it's large scar a cruel reminder of the inhumanity some humans are capable of. At this time, however, the careful nudging of his stump only prompts me to fan him more vigorously.

Today he was getting a break from the constant bandaging, but because of the flies, the dirt and the risk of him tearing his sutures on the ground, I am sitting with him for the day. My crude paper fan serves to reduce the fly burden when the electricity in his sick room cuts out and the ceiling fan stops, allowing a hot, heavy atmosphere to settle on us both. Van Krishna smacks his lips together – still slightly sticky from

his earlier feast of pawpaw and watermelon – and rests his delicate head on my toes. He is preparing to sleep, which will give me an opportunity to tell you his story.

Van Krishna came to the goshala after his mother was attacked by wild street dogs in Vrindavan. A tiny fawn, he took quickly to Kurma Rupa and soon began accepting milk given by the goshala cows, by the bottle. He would hang out during the day with the other small calves, and quickly built a following both with the calves and with all visitors to Care for Cows. He was a delicate little thing, and seemed very fragile in comparison to the calves. It was this delicate frame and of course his sweet nature that made him such a pleasure to be around.

It seemed as though Van Krishna had gotten lucky – although he had lost his mother, he had gained many more at Care for Cows. Unfortunately, this good fortune did not continue. On the 20th April 2006, Van Krishna was grazing out of

Care for Cows boundaries when his left hind limb was broken in a malicious attack. I did not get to see the initial fracture as I was not at the goshala that day, but Dr Lavania quickly came to Van Krishna's aid.

Like most herbivores, *nil gai* or blue cows (Van Krishna's species) don't want to attack or put up much of a fight when afraid. They simply want to run away. Van Krishna was no different, and this particular morning he had much to be afraid of. Unsure of what was happening to him, Van Krishna panicked and began kicking out with his fractured leg whenever restraint was attempted. This struggling resulted in his fracture becoming compound – that is, in a segment of bone protruding out of his skin.

It was at this point that arrangements were made for Van Krishna to travel to Mathura University Veterinary Hospital, where Dr RP Pandey and his team attempted a surgical stabilization of the fracture by inserting a pin down



Cruelly beaten Van Krishna suffers multiple fractures to his leg



Carrying Van Krishna to rest in the recovery room



Drs Lavania and Karen recast Van Krishna's leg

the centre of his fractured tibia. Two inches of bone in the form of fragments were also removed from the fracture site. He returned to Care for Cows that night, and hopes were high for an uneventful recovery.

Again, however, there was a setback. Van Krishna didn't seem to understand that he needed to rest and take it easy. Instead, he attempted to use the fractured leg straight away, and by bearing weight on the limb, the pin forced it's way out of the bone it was supposed to be supporting, fracturing through the top of the tibia and coming out through his skin in his stife (or knee) joint. With each step he tried to take, the pin would slide upwards and poke him in the belly. This was the condition I saw him in initially, and it was horrifying. Only a few days before, my husband had been telling me about the magnificent blue cow that he had seen at Care for Cows, and now all I saw was a sad, twisted pained creature trying to balance on three legs.

Working together with Dr Lavania, we attempted to make the leg more stable by external fixation (such as bandaging) before sending Van Krishna off for his second operation at the University Hospital. Again, hopes were high that we may have been able to save the leg - devotees don't give up on one of Krishna's animals easily, especially not Radharani's pet deer! An x-ray of his leg was taken, with the hope that we may have been able to screw plates onto his bones to hold them in position. When we saw the quality of the bone that was protruding, the prognosis for saving the leg became very grave indeed. The bone was black, and the flesh surrounding the wound in all directions was dying away. In addition, the x-ray showed that the migration of the pin had caused additional damage. There were many bone fragments floating free in his leg - it resembled a bag of ice on x-ray. The bone plates available at the hospital were designed for small animals like cats

and dogs, and would not bear the weight of a large animal like Van Krishna, nor were they long enough to adequately span across all his fracture sites. Tragically, we would be unable to save Van Krishna's leg, but we still wanted to save his life - so he went back into theatre for an amputation. Dr Pandey commenced the 4-hour procedure and I had the opportunity to finish it, in rather trying conditions - the power went off for the final hour, so I was left to sew the wound closed in darkness, with two students holding rapidly fading torches and no air circulating in the room, and no forceps! This was certainly a change from the luxurious surgical suites I was used to in Australia!

After the amputation, we were all looking forward to a trouble-free recovery, and initially it appeared that it would occur. The day after his amputation, Van Krishna stood up with the *gopa's* assistance and walked into the vegetable patch to begin grazing the grass between the



The surgical pin protruding out of the skin



Van Krishna is returned to Mathura University Hospital



Doctors inspect the complexity and condition of the fractures

rows. We were overjoyed, but this optimism gradually faded over the next week, as infection set in to Van Krishna's stump. Day after day, his

bandages would be continually changed, his wounds bathed and debrided, but his skin and muscle continued to be attacked by infection until one day, his entire wound broke down. His skin slipped back up his leg, like a glove slipping off a hand, leaving a raw

mass of tissue in a grotesque imitation of his former stump. There was nothing more that could be done with this wound - it was back to the University Hospital for a third surgery - a second amputation, this time disarticulating the knee joint and removing all bone below it.

It has been a week now since this operation, and so far, things are going reasonably well for Van Krishna. He has certainly lost a lot of

weight - the stress of three surgeries in the Vrindavan summer will do that to anyone - but his appetite remains voracious. As a special goshala

will end up with 1kg of spinach instead of *sak panir* being cooked at my house, but I don't mind one bit.

He is such a special creature to be given the opportunity to care for, and his quiet nature has taught me so much about bravery and dignity in the face of great adversity. As he dozes here, his sweet ears twitching occasionally to pick up the barely audible sound of a gecko puk-



resident, he is certainly getting spoiled by the *gopas* and visitors, and is regularly seen in his room with pawpaw juice dribbling down his chin and a far off look of bliss in his eyes. He is also mad on mangoes, pomegranates, watermelons and mandarins - in short, anything he can throw around and make a juicy, sticky mess with!

Most of my dinner gets usurped before I can eat it, so Van Krishna

puk-puking across the wall or a tiny mouse rummaging in his leaves, he reminds me again what a great honour it is to be able to serve animals. It is our duty to care for the cows (blue cows included) but it is also a great privilege to be able to share their lives so closely and intimately. I can only hope that I can contribute to Van Krishna's continued happiness, and help him avoid as much distress as possible.



Unable to save his leg, Dr Karen joins the amputation surgery team



Removing infected skin caused by the pin



Van Krishna adjusts to standing on three legs



Cow Protection

The following is based on a true story from *Gauseva Chamatkar*, an historical collection of cow miracles

The riot of 1857 was spread all over India – Delhi was the centre of it. Each and every street had become a mortuary. There was blood shed everywhere. The rioters had lost discrimination between good and bad. I was the chief of the Muslim rioters.

At the end of a long day of

looting and killing I was exhausted and hungry. Our pockets and bags were full of money but the markets were deserted out of fear of the riots, and all the houses were locked. We gathered in an empty courtyard and my men went out to search for food. Soon four of my men returned pulling a chubby cow behind them. I

didn't know how that poor one fell in the claws of those hungry wolves.

One of them had tied his turban around her neck and before I could say anything they tied the legs of that crying cow and threw her down on the ground. Who would save a dumb cow from the hands of the Muslims in the middle of that riot?

is Self Protection

At that time all those so-called leaders of Hindu religion, those who give long lectures on cow protection, were all safely hidden in holes. The cow was tired. Tears were falling from her eyes and I was agitated out of hunger. My body was weak.

It is against my religion to consider the cow holy and to serve her. But seeing that innocent cow surrounded by those cruel wolves who were sharpening their knives and about to kill her, I felt pity on her. The cow was frightened and pregnant, and seeing her I remembered my pregnant wife, and I began to shiver.

I stood up with courage and said to my friends, "Can't you see that out of hunger I'm about to die, and you fools are not yet able to provide me food. All of you immediately go and collect wood and salt and I will take care of this." As soon as my friends left I took the knife which was meant for killing the poor cow, cut her loose, and patted her back. At first she couldn't stand up, unable to believe this behavior from me. I stroked her again and she stood up, stretched herself and swished her

tail. At that moment she glanced at me in such a way as if telling me "You will be rewarded for your kindness". She then left, quickly disappearing out of sight.

When my friends returned I was lying on the ground, as if unconscious from hunger. They shook me and asked about the cow. I pretended that I had no idea what had happened. Having no energy to pursue her, they made some chapatis and ate them instead.

When the riots came to an end I was caught by the authorities and sentenced to death by hanging. Hundreds of people gathered outside the jail to watch the event as I was brought up to the gallows. A red hood was pulled over my eyes, and everything went dark. A noose was then secured around my neck. My throat was dry. Within moments the floor opened beneath me and I fell to what I thought would be my death. Suspended mid-air, almost unconscious from fear, I struggled to regain my senses as I realized I was not in fact dead, nor dying, but somehow my feet were being supported upon what seemed to be

two sharp horns. The noose around my neck miraculously remained slack.

Thinking me dead I was brought out from under the platform. Seeing me in fact alive, the doctor was shocked and moved back in astonishment. According to the law at that time, I was hung thrice, and every time two horns caught my fall. As the noose of the gallows was unable to take my life even after three attempts, the court set me free.

I came out of the jail with my relatives and there I saw a cow. She looked at me with her cooling eyes, then turned and walked away, followed by her calf. Immediately I remembered the pregnant cow I had saved during the riot in Delhi. That cow had looked at me in the same way when I had released her.

In my religion serving forms is considered a sin – but I bowed down to that cow who I believe had saved my life. Since that time I consider serving cows my duty, and I will continue to serve cows till the end of my life. I put the dust of the cow's feet on my head, then I go to do *namaj*.

– Author unknown



Aussie Vet at CFC

Dr Karen Curtis graduated from the University of Melbourne in 2004. Having grown up on a vineyard in the Yarra Valley in Victoria, Australia, her family always had lots of animals around on the property, including cows, sheep, alpacas and horses.

For most of her life she competed quite heavily in equestrian events and also showed cows at state agricultural shows, traveling across Australia with her favorite cows, Evelyn and Nirvana.

During her degree, Karen undertook voluntary work in Sri Lanka, working with elephants at the Pinnewala Elephant Orphanage. She also worked at the University of Maryland's dairy as a milkmaid - the

American equivalent of a *gopi*! While in the US she also tried her hand at racetrack work at Saratoga Springs, but decided the early mornings were all too much. As she preferred cows, she completed a short externship in large animal surgery at Cornell University before graduating at Melbourne. Since graduation Karen has been working in rural practice in central west NSW in Australia, but finished work a month ago to come and serve at Care for Cows.

When she arrived at our go-sadan in April on that hot, dusty summer afternoon asking "Is there anything I can do?" we knew that she was sent here especially at that time to look after Van Krishna, who had just been injured two days earlier. Her bag was

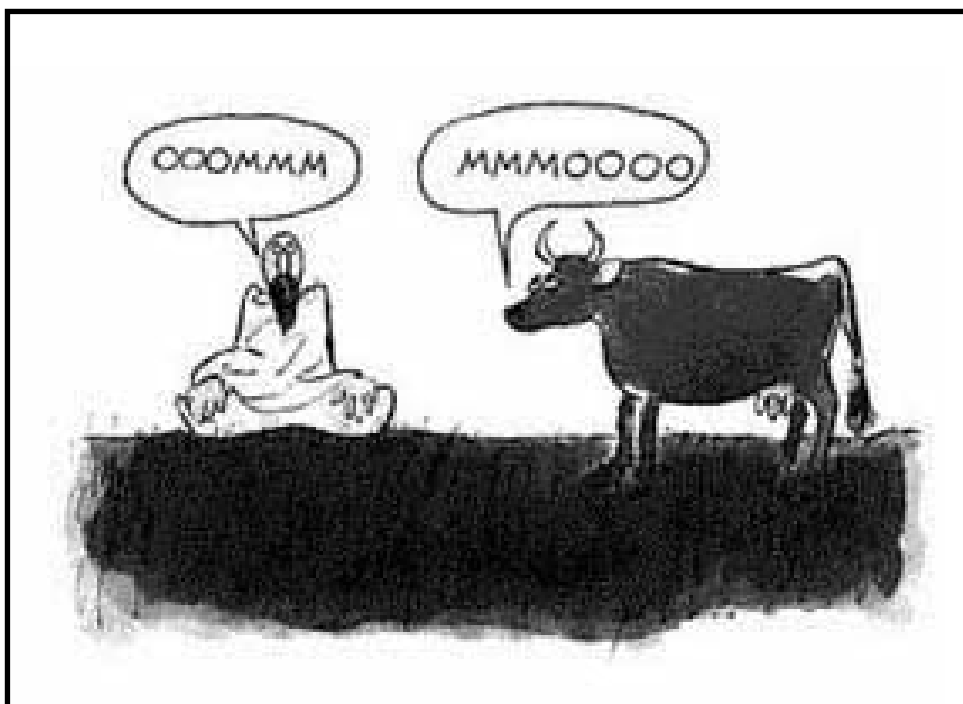
filled to capacity with colorful stretchy self-sticking bandages (a first for India), surgical instruments and all sorts of medical odds and ends - a donation from Karen and her husband to Care for Cows. Karen's service began immediately and as the days went by her service increased with intensive care for Van Krishna as her priority, and regular rounds of our other residents twice a day.

To date during Karen's stay she has tended to Raju's hoof abscess, a mild mange outbreak amongst the calves, Pushpa's number of minor ailments, Braja's continuous leg mending struggle, Shyam's bumps and cuts, Somarasa's spot of discharge developed from his mended fracture site and individual check-

ups. Karen is also giving invaluable classes on medical care for cows, practical training in the latest methods of wound care, how to perform a complete and thorough cow check-up, an overview of drug uses and administering injections.

Working side by side with our simple hearted cowherd men, she picks up common Hindi words and communicates the patients conditions to them with a lot of gesturing thrown in. But how can she tell Sushil each time that he brings Sura dasi, our blind cow, to her, asking if she can at least bring back sight in one of her eyes, that some things are still not possible, not even for western doctors.

As the month draws to an end and the heat soars to 45+ degrees celsius, Karen is seen at the beginning and end of the long summer days at the go-sadan, either in Van Krishna's recovery room or out in the cow yards selflessly tending to Krishna's cows and bulls. She has clearly made a second home at Care for Cows and we thank her for her precious contribution aimed at helping us expand and better our practical knowledge of medical care for cows, and admire her unwavering determination to help Van Krishna in the face of adversity.



Did You Know?



Twins are as uncommon in cows as they are in humans



Winning Hearts

The month of April brought two additions to the Care for Cows herd and welcome new supporters.

Constanze, a German tourist, came across Care for Cows while on a two month pilgrimage in India. Despite the afternoon heat she didn't miss a day to come to the go-sadan and engage in go-seva. While in Loi

Bazaar one day she came across a tiny, unkept and very weak calf standing alone in the street.

Unable to keep him off her mind, she returned to find him the next day and at the end of her search, he appeared. She had him loaded on a rickshaw and brought him to CFC. He has been named Pradyumna.

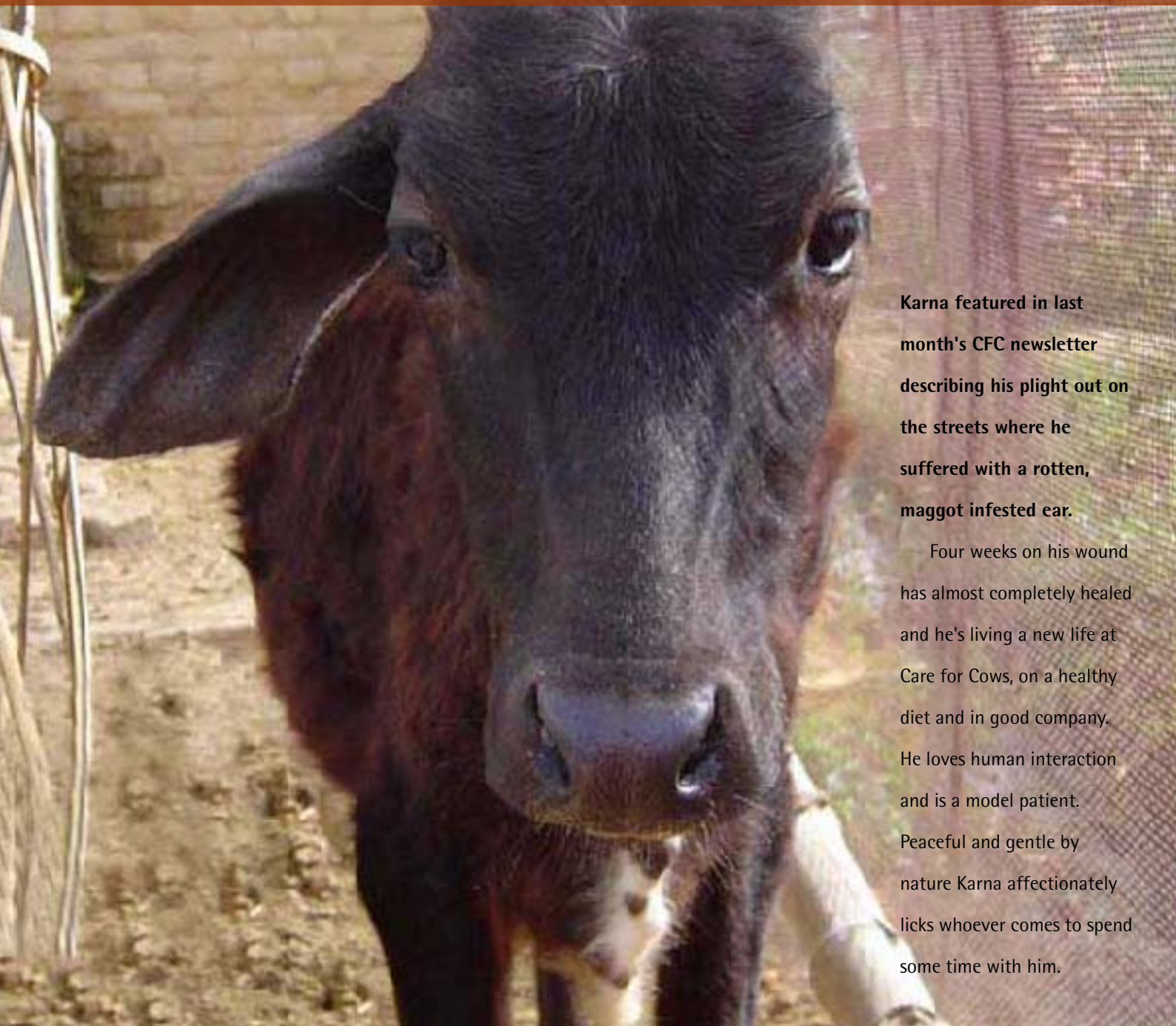
Bhagavad Gita and Katyayani, Detroit USA, also visited and decided to sponsor a calf. They had their eye on Kunjabihari, who shares the name of the Detroit Temple deities, but our most recent and friendly addition to the herd himself chose Katyayani - following her around and charming her. They have named him Giriraj.



Pradyumna, scrawny and weak, was rescued from busy Loi Bazaar by Constanze (top photo)

Bhagavad Gita and Katyayani with Giriraj, their new family member

Remember Karna?



Karna featured in last month's CFC newsletter describing his plight out on the streets where he suffered with a rotten, maggot infested ear.

Four weeks on his wound has almost completely healed and he's living a new life at Care for Cows, on a healthy diet and in good company. He loves human interaction and is a model patient. Peaceful and gentle by nature Karna affectionately licks whoever comes to spend some time with him.



Karna's dead ear was hanging on by only a few threads of skin

CFC staff remove maggots and dead tissue in the first cleaning

A quickly disappearing wound



Wound Care for Cows

by Dr Karen Curtis

Many of the cows that come to the Care for Cows facility have had accidents on the streets of Vrindavan and as a consequence, present with a variety of wounds. Trauma accounts for most of the wounds, be it from car or tractor accidents or sometimes (unfortunately) malicious injuries.

Regardless of the cause of the injury, the task that then faces the dedicated workers of Care for Cows is how to look after the wound. Wounds, such as cuts, grazes and other "fleshy" injuries can be classified into two main groups – those that are clean and those that are contaminated. Clean wounds are

usually the result of planned surgery, or may have just occurred, and depending on the severity and site, may be sutured closed by a veterinarian. Contaminated wounds,



on the other hand, require a bit more management and nursing care.

As the cows of Vrindavan live on the streets, in what can be less than sanitary conditions, almost all of the wounds seen at the goshala are contaminated.

When an wounded cow arrives at the goshala, the first priority is to ensure the cow has no major, life threatening injuries and no bone damage (such as broken bones).

Once this threat has been cleared, the treatment of open wounds can commence. In order to assess the extent of the wound, it needs to be bathed and cleaned, and all foreign matter (such as sticks, gravel, dirt and rubbish) removed. Iodine diluted in water to the

colour of black tea or salt water are both excellent for bathing wounds, as they are soothing and can be used in large amounts to help flush foreign matter out. Some human antiseptics can be harmful to animals as they have a different skin pH (acidity) to

humans, so check with your vet before using other products.

Once the wound is clean, it can be examined further to assess the extent of damage. Often at this point the wound will begin to bleed, although this may appear frightening it is a good sign as blood flow means that the tissues underneath are most likely alive and healthy. Excessive blood flow can usually be stopped (unless an artery is severed, in which case a vet may be required for suturing) by placing a clean gauze swab, cotton wool or clean cloth over the area and pressing firmly. If there is no bleeding from the wound when it is cleaned, and the edges of the wound look black and "cooked", or if the tissues appear rotten, then it is most likely that the wound has dead skin and muscle sitting in it. Dead areas do not heal, so debridement – or removal of this dead tissue – is a very important step. As dead tissue has no feeling, it can be cut away

using surgical scissors. However, it is often difficult to tell where the dead tissue stops and the live tissue begins. Ideally, in order to set up a good healing environment, all of the dead tissue with a small amount of live tissue around the border will be removed. As live tissue has feeling, local anaesthetic can be injected into the area to make this a more comfortable and humane procedure for the cow.

Debridement can also occur with certain sprays and topical medications. These medications are generally a blend of mild acids, which dissolve the dead tissue. Availability of such sprays differ with the location, however in Australia and most other countries they are readily available as over-the-counter products from veterinarians and farm stores. They can be applied liberally to wounds and do an excellent job of getting them clean and decontaminated, particularly in difficult patients or in areas where

surgical debridement is unfeasible.

Another way of debriding wounds is to use granulated sugar. Thickly packed onto clean, contaminated wounds, sugar will promote a nice healing environment, discouraging bacterial growth, encouraging removal of dead tissue and promoting the growth of new cells. Honey (as long as it is pure and unpasturised) can also be used for the same purpose, although it is a little more messy!

Once clean and debrided, wounds then need to be dressed – this helps keep dirt, flies and other sources of contamination out. Dressings range from a simple cotton wool wrap held on with gauze to elaborate bandaging materials impregnated with all manner of medications. For Van Krishna, our bandage for his stump consisted of a few different layers. Firstly, sugar would be packed onto his open wound, to create a good healing environment. This layer would be covered with gauze swabs,



Local anaesthetic is injected before removing dead tissue



A syringe of diluted iodine flushes deep into the wound



A spray is applied to help dissolve dead tissue

which prevented the cotton wool from sticking to the wound and helped keep the sugar in place. The cotton wool also acted as padding to help protect his stump when he was lying down. When available, a layer of a stretchy, cohesive bandage called Vetrap was placed around the cotton wool, and thick Elastoplast bandaging with an adhesive backing was used to bind the whole thing together. This Elastoplast layer was taken up and over Van Krishna's back, as his stump was a very awkward angle and if it was not securely bandaged above his knee and over his back it would only be a matter of minutes before the bandaging was off again!

Changing the dressings is an important part of wound care – wounds are dynamic and are constantly changing, hopefully for the better but sometimes for the worse. Regular bandage changes allow us to see what is going on with the wound and to clean and remove

exudates. Initially, Van Krishna's bandages required changing every 12 hours, as he had a large area of contamination where the intramedullary pin had protruded through his skin. His cotton wool would be soaked through with a pus discharge, and he did a very effective job of loosening his bandages himself through his nibbling!

At each bandage change, his wound would be bathed with diluted iodine before rebandaging. After his second operation, as the wound progressed and began to heal, the bandage changes were reduced to only once a day. Depending on the progress, we hope to cut bandage changes back further in the near future – this will mean less stress for Van Krishna and less expense in bandages.

The essence of wound care – clean, debride, provide a nice healing environment – are the same for nearly all wounds, but each wound is individual and the details of the

management of each wound will be different. As wound healing is a dynamic process, what is useful at the start of the healing procedure may not be appropriate at the end, so careful, flexible management is required. Other medications may also be prescribed by the veterinarian – in Van Krishna's case, he also had injectable antibiotics and pain relief (but remember that antibiotics will not make up for a shoddy cleaning job and they cannot ever replace good nursing!)

Van Krishna's wound was an extraordinary case of determination on his part and an excellent, dedicated team helping him – all of the *gopas* and *gopis* of the goshala put in a vast amount of time, resources and money. I hope that by using his wound as an example on how to care for wounds, that Van Krishna can inspire other people around the world the same way he has inspired us all here at Care for Cows in Vrindavan.



Contaminated skin was trimmed back to reveal healthy tissue



Granulated sugar promotes growth of new cells



Bandaging with both gauze and Elastoplast

Life on the Streets



Early one morning in Vrindavan we received a call about an injured bull found resting on the parikram marg. He was bleeding on his right side and it seemed he'd been side-swiped by a vehicle.

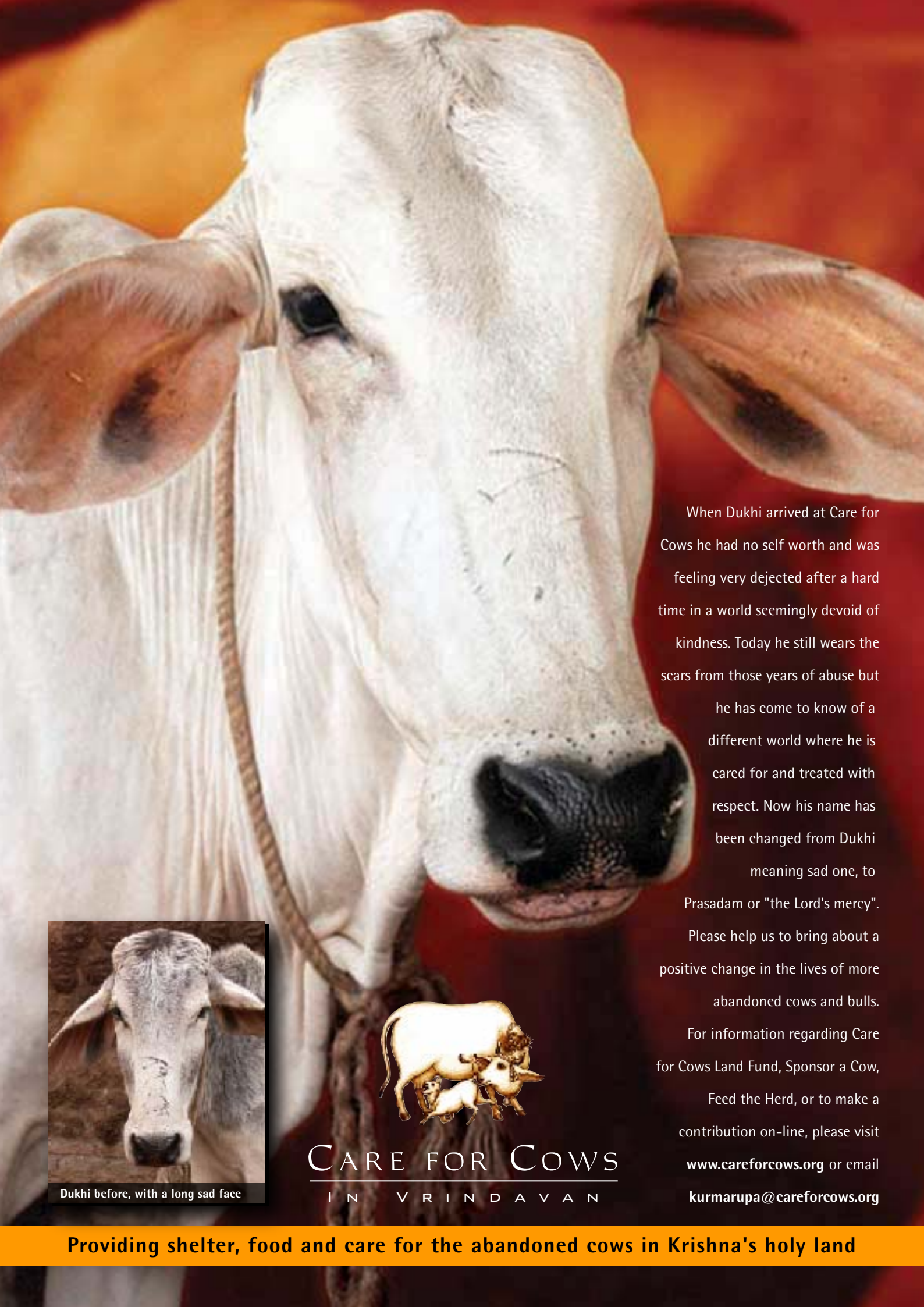
No-one seemed to have seen what had happened and no-one took

responsibility. The hustle and bustle on Vrindavan's poorly kept streets and laneways takes its toll on most abandoned cows sooner or later.

Especially during auspicious times such as the month of Kartika, Janmastami and other holy festivals when the biggest crowds flock to

Vrindavan. Unable to cope with the swelling numbers of over-packed vehicles Vrindavan's streets become somewhat like a dodgem car rink.

Please help us to acquire more land to accommodate and protect Vrindavan's abandoned cows, bulls and calves.



When Dukhi arrived at Care for Cows he had no self worth and was feeling very dejected after a hard time in a world seemingly devoid of kindness. Today he still wears the scars from those years of abuse but he has come to know of a different world where he is cared for and treated with respect. Now his name has been changed from Dukhi meaning sad one, to Prasadam or "the Lord's mercy".

Please help us to bring about a positive change in the lives of more abandoned cows and bulls.

For information regarding Care for Cows Land Fund, Sponsor a Cow,

Feed the Herd, or to make a contribution on-line, please visit

www.careforcows.org or email

kurmarupa@careforcows.org



Dukhi before, with a long sad face



CARE FOR COWS
IN VRINDAVAN

Providing shelter, food and care for the abandoned cows in Krishna's holy land