

SUMMER TROTTINGS

Don't let the dream end...

Just recently, when I went to feed dear Alice Pig she was nowhere in sight. A tell tale flicker of her ear soon gave away her comfy retreat. So over I strode and there beneath the golden straw lay dear Alice. "Come on Alice, dinner time". No movement. "Aw, come on Alice, Daisy will get it all and you know what she is like". Another flicker of her ear, but still no attempt to move. Alice looked so peaceful lying there, and I could fully appreciate that if our places were traded and in the absence of hunger (of which Alice clearly is these days) I wouldn't have wanted to shift either. I sat down beside the almost concealed pig and just marvelled at her tranquillity. She nonchalantly snored on. Stroking her face, I again enquired would she like her dinner. A gently "nff nff" was this time forthcoming, so I obliged and offered her an apple. She gently took it, but never opened her eyes. Next a carrot, then some bread, piece of rock melon, a donut, and yet more fruit. Alice graciously devoured the lot, savouring each morsel as if it was the most tastiest treat her taste buds had ever encountered - yet never opened her eyes. The only indication she gave that she was ready for more was the opening of her mouth and the gently "nff" for more.

I couldn't help but think Alice was in some far off dream world from which she didn't want to return. A place of great comfort and security, yet she was totally at ease with my presence. This was indeed a different pig from the saggy teated sow I met a few years earlier who had no trust in man, a heart filled with fear and a body scarred from the ordeal. Whilst I can never fully lay claim to knowing what an animal is thinking, no more really than I can a fellow human, I wondered whether Alice ever thought about her past. Perhaps she was afraid to wake only to find that life here at Edgar's Mission was but a beautiful dream and she was in reality stuck 24/7 lying in that miserable sow stall. No kind words of comfort, no straw for warmth or bedding and certainly no yummy treats or room to move. A world without hope except for one's dreams.

Dreams, in which one could escape to a place where you are valued for who you are not for what you can produce. A world where life is about choices, your choices. Not about production targets and economics. A place where one can make lifelong friends and a place where one can find warmth when it is cold and inviting wallows when it is hot. A place of freedom to see the sunshine, smell fresh air and stretch until your heart is content - a place just like Edgar's Mission Farm Sanctuary. Perhaps dear Alice couldn't believe that such a place really existed beyond her dreams and that experiencing all these wonderful things that she could right now would end when she awoke.

200 years ago, through the efforts of the visionary and courageous English Parliamentarian William Wilberforce, the slave trade suffered its most crucial blow with the enactment of the Foreign Slave Trade Act (1806-07). This decisive legislation outlawed the participation of British vessels in the slave trade. Up until this point freedom for black people was but a dream, and they too must have thought that things would never ever change with injustice reigning supreme. But still while their liberty and reasons for living were stripped away, no one could ever take away their ability to dream. With crusaders like Wilberforce offering hope that one day, despite what at the time seemed insurmountable odds, justice would prevail and dreams become reality.

Alice is indeed a lucky pig, because for her freedom is now her reality and choices are of her own making. But for millions, no billions of pigs, and other farmed animals, it is but a dream and we must never ever let that dream end despite our insurmountable odds.

So what have we been up to?

Gosh heaps, is the short answer.

- Many may have heard about the plight of Bruce the pig, a somewhat cheeky and inquisitive pig who left his home in Uki, Qld and headed off in search of “greener pastures”. Unfortunately Bruce’s exploits in the garden of Caroline Hayes saw him carted off by the Rural Lands and Protection Board to, we are told, a free range pig farm. Although, despite our best efforts to locate this farm, we have not been able to. Our offer to rehome Bruce here at Edgar’s Mission Farm Sanctuary fell on deaf ears.

Bruce’s exploits raised international attention and our plea for pigs made for an opinion piece in the most widely read Victorian Newspaper, The Herald Sun <http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,24421350-5000117,00.html>, I was particularly chuffed to read that they got my name wrong and I was elevated to the status of “Pam Edgar!”

- Continued our market, school and event visits with our information van and Miss Priscilla “Queen of the Barn” Pig. Don’t tell Priscilla, but she is becoming quite a celebrity, even getting invitations to attend certain events. But at this stage it seems the only thing swelling is her tummy!! Our media releases are continuing to be picked up by the local press to whom we send them and our new camera has proved a great asset in producing high quality images. It seems a photo of a cute kid and equally cute pig never fails to receive interest.

I have so many wonderful stories that come from my market visits but one stands out in particular. A sweet young girl recently met Priscilla at a scout market. She returned several times during the day just to marvel at Priscilla and her unique brand of pigginess. Often kneeling down to help me give Priscilla a much needed tummy rub. (I am told on good authority from none other than Miss Priscilla that this important act of animal husbandry needs to be performed at a bare minimum of 6 times on the hour, although she was unable to provide any references on this fact). On one occasion this delightful young girl gently held Priscilla’s trotter in her hand and said “oh how can people eat these things?” Indeed, how can they?

- Hosted numerous farm tours as well as providing presentations to Probus Clubs and the like.

- Some rather exciting news - I’ve been hung!! Thanks to the efforts of some wonderfully loyal friends I have been announced as one of only twenty unsung heroes of Australia which culminated in my portrait being hung in the new National Public Gallery which opened in Canberra on Wednesday 3rd of December. I was truly fortunate to attend this most prestigious event and whilst I am still coming to terms with being labelled a hero, something I can assure you I am not, I am so blown away by the fact that now even Kevin Rudd, our Prime Minister, and John Howard, our former Prime Minister, now know about a pig called Edgar. Some pig, indeed, I am sure you will agree! <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/myfavouriteaustralian/>

- Installed a water tank on the feed room to increase our supply of rain water.

- Created a very visual and informative library display for World Animal Day. This was displayed in the Kilmore Library the first week in October to coincide with World Animal Day

- Staged our third World Animal Day event on, as always the first Sunday in October.
- Busily preparing for Carols by Barnlight, to be held Saturday December 13th, 4pm til 8pm. We hope to remind one and all of the true meaning of Christmas and that is peace and goodwill to ALL creatures. Hope to see as many of you here as possible.
- Also putting our thinking caps on for Kids Day Out on Sunday January 18th, 2008. 10.00am til 4pm.00pm.

How have funds been spent?

- Purchased two truck loads of water. This is of great concern. The first load we purchased was in October. We have never had to buy water so early in the season before. The drought is really hitting us hard as our rain water, dam and bore supply, are struggling to meet demands.
- Veterinary fees, including three operations for little Monique. A huge thank you to all who have made most generous donations to help with this.
- Purchased accessories for our new camera.
- Feed. As always our most substantial expense
- Registration of our van along with a substantial outlay to fix a mechanical problem. Along with diesel to keep us on the road.
- Paid our public liability insurance. Again a substantial out lay but one we must have in order to attend many events and also to give us some peace of mind in the most unlikely event....
- Lodgement fee for our Annual Return with the Department of Justice.
- Toilet hire for open days.
- Payment of fee to attend the Pet Expo at Caulfield Racecourse in February 2009. This is the largest pet expo in our state and one which will give us great exposure for both our work and our cause. We very much look forward to three very hectic days.
- Construction of A new goat shelter in the recently constructed Goatville
- Farrier fees for Brian and Georgia. We have been truly fortunate to find a most wonderful and supportive barefoot hoof trimmer to attend to our equine friends
- Stationary, office supplies and postage
- Constructed the rabbit equivalent of the Taj Mahal!!!
- Purchased a water tank for the feed room.

More ways to help animals

- Victoria's native waterbirds need our help. Here's what you can do; Click here – www.saveourwaterbirds.org – to help persuade Victorian Premier Brumby to ban the recreational shooting of native waterbirds permanently or at least call another moratorium in 2009. This is very quick and simple. Click on - www.saveourwaterbirds.org - fill in your name and address and then click 'Send email to Brumby'. The Victorian government will make a decision on the 2009 recreational duck shooting season sometime in December, probably before Christmas. The shooters are desperate for another season and they are pushing very hard. The recreational shooting of native waterbirds was cancelled in Victoria in 2007 and 2008 due to low waterbird numbers and drought.

And last, but certainly not least, we welcome the following residents to Edgar's Mission.

- Mary and Monique. A mother and daughter pair. Certainly down on their luck when we came along but these plucky two are now richly rewarding us for our efforts as only dear piggies can.

- Tilt, a male Pekin duck, who was rescued from a market vendor. Blind in one eye as a result of an injury, Tilt has comfortably settled into life at Edgar's Mission and has learned the road rules from Phantom Duck.

- Romulus and Remus. Two extremely lucky little male goats, who only a few hours old were found walking the streets of Melbourne. This cheeky pair has confirmed our belief that nothing is as mischievous as a baby goat except of course two!!!!

- Itchy and Scratchy. Two itchy and scratchy female pigs who found themselves in the local lockup (read pound). A caring ranger took up their plight and assisted in their relocation to Edgar's Mission where we have been able to find a loving home for this delightful pair and have also had them both desexed to ensure that they will never breed.

- Thumper, Peaches and Tommy. Three of the sweetest rabbits you could ever meet.

-Benny, a curious and somewhat timid little sheep who has formed a strong bond with the ever so cheeky Cotta Dot, a sheep who arrived about 12 months ago as a sickly little orphan. The two busy there days sneaking under the fence and hiding in wait until the coast is clear to the feed room! Who said sheep were dumb?

As always, we at Edgar's Mission Farm Sanctuary would like to take this opportunity to thank all the wonderful people who have contributed either physically, financially or emotionally to our work. Without you Edgar's Mission would not be possible. Thank you, my friends.

Cheers, and don't let the dream end.
P & E (for ever my inspiration)

Cheers P & E

“I think everybody has that capacity to stop and think and say ‘If I knew you, I wouldn’t eat you’. And in some ways, it really is that simple”

Tom Regan, (B 1938-)Philosopher, Author