NO one can fail to have been touched by the media images and stories from people in Nepal following the earthquake on April 25 and I commend Veterinary Record for highlighting the efforts of international organisations in providing care and support to animals and livestock owners there (VR, May 9, 2015, vol 176, p 479).

I would also, however, like to champion the small, indigenous animal welfare and
livestock organisations and individual Nepali citizens who are the real players in this relief effort. It is they who carried out the initial humanitarian 'rescues' of animals (and many people) and they who, despite their own emotional traumas, continue to work tirelessly to assess and address the current problems and future needs.

I have heard of many individual local vets offering their voluntary help to the Nepali Veterinary Association with whatever is required. Yes, Nepal is a poor country, infrastructure before the disaster was not strong and help is (and will be) welcomed by vets and livestock owners in Nepal, but let us acknowledge that the local vets are best placed to articulate their needs, both now and in the future. Local organisations might be funded by outside agencies; the body I work for has supported a Nepali animal health organisation for many years, but this is not about ‘us’ and should not become a PR exercise. A Nepali colleague told me that the work they are doing to assess and treat animals has been confused by external agencies turning up and not coordinating with local initiatives. One international animal welfare agency team apparently turned up with a bigger media team than its volunteer team that was there to help. I hasten to add this was not a UK organisation, nor was it one of those mentioned in the Veterinary Record article.

We all are desperate to help; I spent three years living and working in Nepal and still have many friends and colleagues there; I have no desire to put people off donating or helping. However, please let us think about three months, six months, 12 months down the line, when Nepal will really need our help in rebuilding its animal health and livestock infrastructure, but when it will have moved from the media spotlight.

Karen Reed, The Old School, Netherfield Battle, East Sussex TN33 9PS
email: karenj@supanet.com

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