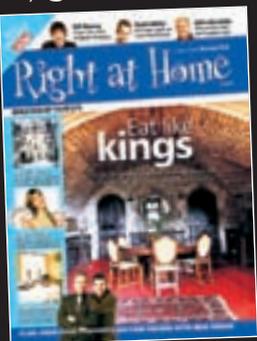


**sunday
mail**

VET SCOTT MILLER TRAVELS TO

INSIDE
Right at Home



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Makeovers with Justin and Colin

DIY



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Bill Chudziak in full bloom

Cruelty:
Scott wants to end the agony for dancing bears

Their teeth smashed by an iron bar, bears shake in agony as keepers pull on a rope in their snouts

THE DANCE

SUNDAY MAIL vet Scott Miller is battling to rescue India's desperate dancing bears.

Scott, 32, has travelled to the sub-continent to help rescue the tortured animals and perform emergency surgery on their wounds.

The bears are kept by Kalandar gypsies who make them "dance" for money.

But the tourists who toss them a few coins are unaware that the animals' jerking movements are in fact shudders of agony.

The bears are stolen from their mothers as cubs and have never known a life free of pain and misery.

To control them, a red hot poker is inserted through the nose into the mouth.

By **STEVE DINNEEN**

A rope is pushed through the hole and yanked by its keeper causing the bear to shake in pain.

The wounds inevitably become infected, leaving the animals in constant agony.

Scott said: "The state some of the poor creatures were in was horrific."

"The injuries to their snouts are especially cruel as in the wild they live by sniffing out termite nests and catching them with their long claws."

Scott has just returned from a trip which took him from Agra in the north to Mumbai on the west coast.

He travelled with a team of three specialist dentists who helped ease some

of the bears' suffering. As well as the mutilation of their snouts, the animals' front teeth are smashed out with an iron bar to stop them turning on their keepers.

As a result they sustain severe mouth infections and abscesses.

Pain

Scott said: "We spent a week with the bears doing a lot of root fillings, extractions and relieving the terrible pain they're in."

"We were able to treat these in a lot of the bears so hopefully they'll be able to lead normal lives in the sanctuaries."

"I guess it might seem daunting working on bears - especially for the dentists who are more used to drilling human teeth - but when you see them you realise

Easing pain:
Sunday Mail vet Scott Miller



INDIA TO SAVE TORTURED ANIMALS



Care: Scott looks on as dancing bear's teeth are treated



Torture: Bears are chained up in tiny cages with no room to move

OF DEATH

they are just beautiful animals who desperately need your help. They are not scary and vicious like some people imagine them.

“Obviously they are wild animals and they are capable of hurting you if they are provoked but they are not aggressive.”

The practice of bear dancing has been illegal in India for 30 years but still carries on because the desperately poor can make money from tourists who pay to watch the performance.

But Scott says the numbers are so small it can be ended for good – and he has pledged to help achieve that aim.

He said: “There has been a lot of attention given to dancing bears and it is really coming under control. Already

around half of the bears are off the streets and it is thought that there are only about 800 still being used and abused.”

Indian police are working with charities to seize the bears.

They are then taken to one of a number of sanctuaries where they can recover and lead relatively normal lives.

Abuse

However some owners have permits to keep the bears until a place in a sanctuary has been made available and the abuse continues.

Scott said: “The police over there were really good.

“We have been working with them to raid keepers who are still dancing the bears

and seizing their animals. The people who are making them dance are often destitute themselves and desperate to make some money to feed their families.

“But when you see how much the bears suffer there is no excuse for the treatment.

“The problem is it's difficult to persuade a starving family that they have to give up their sole source of income.

“So as well as rescuing the bears we are educating the Kalandar people to earn money in other ways so they won't go straight out and catch more bears.”

“We've set up sewing schools where they can learn to weave clothes that they can sell for much more money than they get through the bears.

“We also run driving classes so the

Kalandar people can earn money transporting goods.

“It is initiatives like this that will stop bear dancing forever.

“It's great to see young bears, whose mothers have often been killed by poachers, playing together in the sanctuaries. It's a very rewarding experience.

Cruel

“It is utterly conceivable that in the next few years the whole situation may be resolved.”

● Help save the dancing bears of India by donating to International Animal Rescue. Visit their website at www.iar.org.uk.

■ SUNDAY EMAIL
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Sanctuary: Bears Mission to save Chinese bile bears

A SCOTS vet is leading the fight against Chinese bear-bile farms.

The practice has been branded “the worst form of animal cruelty in the world.”

Chinese moon bears are kept in horrific conditions while their bile is harvested for cosmetics and traditional Chinese medicine.

Now Norman Johnston, a dental vet, of North Berwick, is going to China to carry out emergency dental work on the abused bears.

The bears are in cages so small they are unable to turn around.

They have catheters inserted into their gall bladder, then the bile – worth twice as much per millilitre as most Chinese workers earn in a week – is drained.

Farmers don't clean the wounds inflicted by the catheters, meaning



Vet school: University

they become infected. The bears are left in constant agony.

Norman, 50, said: “Bile farming is horrific. The Chinese government claims it is against the practice but it does little about it.”

Norman, who lectures for Edinburgh University Royal Veterinary College, will work at a sanctuary in Chengdu, near Sizuan province in China where 205 bears are housed.

He added: “Thankfully the animals I'll be working have been rescued and nursed back to a degree of health.

“Doing dental work on a bear is the same as working on anything else, only bigger. Except if it wakes up it might kill you.”

● To donate to the Animals Asia Foundation go to www.animalsasia.org