

The mending of Maya the mare

The victim of a hit-and-run gets a new lease on life

GYALSTEN K DORJI, PARO

It takes four people to lift the horse upright, so that she can eat more comfortably. After a few minutes, the mare, unable to support herself any longer, collapses to the ground. Blankets are draped over her to prepare for another cold night.

COMPASSION

It has been nearly one month since the mare was found injured at Paro in December last year.

One of her hind legs, gashed and fractured in two places, the broken bones clearly visible when the dressings are removed, was probably caused by a heavy vehicle.

With efforts to locate the owner proving futile, an American woman, Jamie, currently residing in Paro, decided to take responsibility.

The mare was transported to her residence, where a basic structure to temporarily house the animal was constructed.

The injuries were found to be too severe to repair with materials available in the country. "Her only option here is

amputation, which will mean a very limited life, as much of the weight is on its hind limbs," Jamie said.

Besides feeding and cleaning the horse's wounds daily, Jamie found an equine orthopaedic specialist from the United States willing to come to Bhutan to perform what could be a life-saving operation on the mare, which Jamie now calls Maya.

Jamie said that the first hope is to repair the leg with titanium plates and screws. If this is not possible after digital x-rays have been taken, a portion of the leg will be amputated and then she will be fitted with a prosthetic leg. The equine orthopaedic specialist, Dr Ted Vlahos, is providing his surgery free of cost. He will be arriving in the country on January 19.

The entire endeavour is costing Jamie an estimated USD 10,000-15,000. But Jamie hopes to gain further support, as people become aware of the situation, along with animal care agencies abroad. Fund raising was unfortunately not an option ahead of time, because of the life-threatening nature of



Jamie and Maya

the matter, she said.

Jamie said she is excited and most grateful for the support she has been receiving from concerned locals. She pointed out that the national airline, Drukair has "graciously" sponsored their tickets into Paro.

Asked what kind of support she has been receiving from the local community, Jamie said

that the agricultural ministry has extended its support and cooperation to make the surgery possible.

She added that a local resort, Tenzinling, had provided carpenters to construct the temporary shelter for the horse. She said that a local business woman, Ugyen Wangmo, had organised a few members of

the community to help build a horse stable, in which the surgery could be performed, and where she could live through her recovery time.

On the reason behind her efforts, Jamie said, "Animals can't speak for themselves, so we have to speak up for them in whatever way needed."