

# off the fence.

## Frontier Vets (Series 1)

13 x 30'

### EPISODIC BREAKDOWN

#### 1. Lion Club Rescue

The vet students meet for the first time and travel 7 hours to the remote clinic. We learn about their fears and insecurities -- fear of failure and the weight of responsibilities ahead.

The resident vet, Dr. Greg, helps them muddle through the first real cases of their young careers.

At the end of the long day, the vets are called out to an emergency – a lion cub has escaped out a local wildlife park, placing itself and the community in danger. The vets form a search party in the pitch black bushveld. Can they find the nursing cub before certain death from dehydration? Can Agatha redeem herself after a disastrous start at the clinic?

#### 2. Tough Day at the Office

The vets get situated in their dormitory accommodations. Dr. Greg deliberately pairs them according to their differences. Vets need to learn to work with colleagues and clients different from themselves.

The students dive into more cases. Drew and scared Agatha must dart a wild warthog to help treat its painfully swollen leg and Niven is punished by Dr. Greg for some immature antics.

Niven has to care for a dying goat and sides with Delarey's treatment suggestion over Roxanne's. Will the goat survive?

Later as a group they run a cattle call where over a 1000 local cows take a medicated plunge bath to prevent disease and parasites. The vets have never experienced anything like this before as they have to deal with the chaos around them.

The day is reflected on as the group enjoys a bonfire, but there are growing tensions amongst the group. Will they fracture or be brought closer together by their differences?

### **3. Elephant Down**

Roxanne let her puppy case, 'Ripple' stay overnight at the dorm. The group – especially her roommate Charlotte - is critical of this. Not only is she using the dog as a social crutch, it's highly unprofessional to become so attached to a patient.

The students get to accompany a research team to conduct a study on Africa's biggest mammal – an adult elephant. But the routine research soon becomes a high intensity emergency situation.

Agatha and Tina have their first spat. At any given time, Niven is either teasing Roxanne or dismissing her medical opinions. Delarey takes on helping Drew with the language. Charlotte is shocked to hear the news about her first case, an ailing calf. And Tina is brought a puzzling case of a goat with neurological problems. Her pragmatic mind jumps to 'euthanize it.' Niven and Agatha face 'The Killer Cow' and petite Agatha must face her fear of cattle head on.

The day ends at a local festival where the group makes foreigners Tina and Drew eat dried chicken feet – a local snack. One foot ends up in Niven's bed that night! Who's the prankster?

### **4. Will Ripple Lose a Leg**

Dr. Greg forces the students to attend a local Heritage Festival – something none of them are in the mood for on their 'day off'. But will their attitudes change after witnessing the South African dance and folk customs?

It's a big day for Roxanne. She's to perform orthopedic surgery on the puppy she's all but adopted, Ripple. She feels nervous and unprepared. Chances are she will have to amputate Ripple's leg! Will her nerves and emotional attachment to Ripple get in the way of making the tough decisions during the complex and risky surgery? And in a shocking move Delarey, who has been critical of Roxanne's choices towards Ripple, is replaced as her assistant.

Later Delarey pours his frustration and energy into motivating the group to help raise up a weak cow that can't get up. If it can't get up and stand on its own, it will be slaughtered. The task of lifting the heavy animal is very dangerous causing dissensions in the group. Will they manage to raise the cow or will they put their own safety first?

Tina's goat seems to be improving making Tina doubt her veterinary instinct. Meanwhile Agatha and Niven are called to attend to a sickly calf. If they don't act quickly it could die, and if it does the impact on the sensitive Agatha could be disastrous.

## **5. Lizzard Crazy**

Tina's goat case is an emotional rollercoaster for the young vet as the little kid has taken a turn for the worse again. For Tina euthanasia is the humane thing to do, but the owner is extremely religious and refuses to have it killed. He believes it will recover. Tina becomes an emotional wreck. Can she convince the owner to have the goat euthanized? Meanwhile Agatha seriously contemplates quitting being a vet because of her oversensitive nature.

The group discovers Roxanne's childhood fear of lizards. Niven takes the opportunity to exploit it.

Dr. Greg assigns Roxanne a case at the lizard sanctuary. She's beside herself emotionally. Will her roommate Charlotte come to her aid or will their strained relationship deteriorate further?

Charlotte is assigned her first operation – a dog castration. The problem is, she tends to faint at the sight of blood. Will she collapse at the operating table?

Delarey and Niven are in charge of pre-medicating the dog for Charlotte's operation. After his criticism of Dr Greg's pre-medicating of Ripple, Delarey goes with the drugs he recommended for Ripple. But has he chosen the right drug combo? If not the dog could wake up mid-surgery and all hell could break loose.

Roxanne emerges as a leader in solving a crisis and the group dynamic shifts towards respecting the underdog, Roxanne.

The group hits the bars for a night out but will Roxanne join them? Watch as Niven makes a move on Charlotte on the dance floor!

## **6. Goodbye Agatha**

Dr. Greg is unhappy that the group returns to work after their night out hung over and with a new awkwardness between Niven and Charlotte. As a punishment, he puts the group to task cleaning the clinic. Niven and Drew are assigned the worst job – cleaning the dip tank coral. Drew is especially upset because he's come all the way from America, to scoop poop!

Later Tina visits her dying goat again to find that it's miraculously trying to stand on its own. She's flabbergasted and feeling stupid. Has religion trumped science? Meanwhile Dr. Greg takes a big chance on Agatha – he assigns her to a difficult calf birth case. If the calf dies in birth, she'll surely quit, but if it lives, he hopes she'll feel the joy of the profession and not give up.

Drew does a complicated blood transfusion for a puppy, but will the owner show a sense of gratitude for what he has done? Niven and Jonathan help with a 4AM capture of an elusive reedbeak whose kick can rip out your intestines or permanently disfigure you.

The students are called out to a local baboon sanctuary that has 600 orphaned and unwanted baboons. Dr. Greg bumps Charlotte into Niven's spot at the operating table for the castration of an overly aggressive baboon. Does this further strain their relationship?

Agatha is feeling motivated again only to learn that she actually failed her exams and must leave the residency.

## **7. Puppy Emergency**

Drew and Agatha have to deal with a dog with a broken leg brought in by a group of youngsters with no money. Will Agatha stand up to Drew who has decided to send them away to find money, by insisting the dog stays at the clinic?

Roxanne and Charlotte treat a tragically emaciated dog and are very critical of the owner. They give him firm lesson in dog care, but wonder if any of it sank in.

The group runs another cattle dip where the owners take to whipping the cows more than ever. Drew is extremely upset. His frustrations threaten to boil over as his inability to communicate with the owners and his frustrations with the environment reach boiling point.

A dying puppy is brought to the clinic. It isn't breathing. Dr Greg shouts instructions to the young vets but the emergency case has caught them by surprise – they struggle to find the necessary equipment and drugs. Will the puppy survive?

Everyone in the group is at an all time low. Dr. Greg takes the group to a beautiful waterfall in the mountains in attempt to reenergize them.

## **8. Don't Judge a Book By its Cover**

Charlotte has growing cynicism towards the owner of the emaciated black dog, when he repeatedly dodges his responsibility. Charlotte and Roxy set out on a house call to investigate. What will they find at the owner's house? What condition are his other dogs in?

Drew and Agatha are also perplexed because the kids who brought in a puppy with a broken leg were scheduled to return with money and they don't show up. Drew doesn't seem to care, whereas Agatha realizes her instinct was right: they should have kept the puppy at the clinic. She vows never to doubt herself again!

She gets her chance in her next case but will she follow through and take a stand for the first time with a dying puppy? The owner has no money and doesn't want the animal. Should they leave the dog to die? Will Agi back down and allow the others to once again persuade her?

Jonathan must face his fear of snakes at a reptile park. Meanwhile Drew is inspired by the owner of the reptile park and decides he too should TRY to make a difference in Africa. He wants to stop the whipping of cows and calls a community meeting. But will anyone listen?

Thrilled, Roxanne has convinced her parents to adopt Ripple, but then Greg drops a bombshell: he isn't comfortable having Ripple taken out of the community. Roxanne is devastated. Will the group come together around her in support? What will become of little Ripple?

## **9. Competition**

Dr. Greg sets up a darting competition – the winner gets to dart a zebra on an upcoming case. Delarey, the hunter, is shocked when Roxanne, hits a bulls eye! Can he do the same?

The zebra darting is an exciting and dangerous event because while getting towards the zebra a herd of buffalo move in and at one point Delarey has to fight off a feisty Wildebeest.

Later, the local Chief invites the students to a community feast. The students observe the meat preparation at the slaughter house. The visit brings up issues of animal welfare, hygiene and cultural myth being taken as fact. Who is prepared to eat the meat? Who is going to decline and risk insulting the Chief?

Agatha's attachment to the little puppy Milo grows and fears returning the puppy to a bad situation. Having finally backed herself, this case has the potential to go horribly wrong and the consequences could be devastating for the sensitive vet's self-confidence.

Jonathan and Niven react to an emergency case – a Jack Russel dog has been bitten by a Black Mamba, a highly poisonous snake. For the first time we see Jonathan react emotionally to a case and Niven feel the real weight of his responsibility as a vet.

## **10. Euthenization & Tina**

During a rabies vaccination campaign Niven struggles to vaccinate a nervous dog. Will he see the task through or will his impatient nature let him down? An unvaccinated dog is a danger to the community.

The students are called out to a cheetah rehabilitation farm, but Tina and Niven must stay behind and manage the clinic solo. Tina is nervous when she is called out to treat a cow and must go alone. Conflict arises when the owners bar her from entering the “kraal” because of the local belief that a woman could upset the ancestors. How does the self-proclaimed ‘rude German’ react?

Back at the clinic Niven has to attend to an aggressive dog. The owner wants the dog put down as he has bitten her son. But upon closer inspection the cause becomes clear. After an impassioned explanation to the owner from Niven, will she change her mind and agree to fund a castration operation? For the first time Niven has taken responsibility for a case, but will it backfire on him?

Tina is again called out to a case where an old dog, Bobby, has a bad head wound from a gunshot. The wound is old and filled with maggots. A large part of the ear would need to be removed. The dog’s owner is distraught and begs her to do what she can to save his friend. He is willing to borrow money from his friends to treat the dog. Tina has to decide between trying to treat a difficult wound or put the dog down.

Agatha teaches puppy owners how to take care of Milo. The group is surprised to find that though she was very attached to the puppy, her loving care was more about the puppy and the boy than her own desires. But will the puppy owners follow her advice?

Niven’s client has come to collect her aggressive dog. If there is no change, she will surely opt for euthanasia.

Once again Niven is called into Greg’s office – is he in trouble again?

## **11. The Hunter**

Some of the other students question whether Tina's goat case might have influenced her decision regarding the old dog Bobby . Filled with doubt, guilt and regret Tina struggles with her decision. But what does Dr Greg think? Did she make the right choice?

Controversy between the vets heat up on the subject of hunting and animal welfare to the point where Tina threatens to call the police on a group going hunting.

The students are invited to a witchdoctor inauguration. They are enjoying the spectacle until one of the participants gets caught up in a trance. Agatha is very uncomfortable with what she is seeing and refuses to watch further.

She begins to wonder whether tradition and modern views can co-exist. If not, which side of the fence does she want to be on?

Jonathan and Niven are called out to help re-locate two Reedbuck. The dangerous nature of the capture could cause Jonathan's doubts about his choice of profession to deepen.

After being called out to examine a dead cow that has been cut up in the veld Delarey suspects the cow has died because of a plant insecticide that the owner administered to the cow. But soon Delarey makes an alarming discovery: the cow shows all the symptoms of having died of anthrax, a deadly disease that is easily spread and if inhaled by humans could be fatal.

Delarey races back to the clinic and breaks the news to Dr Greg. The students' lives are at risk as are the lives of all the people who have already cut up the carcass and eaten the meat. The students will need to rule anthrax in or out as soon as possible.

Tensions and tempers run high as Delarey blames Dr Greg for not acting quickly enough.

## **12. Anthrax Outbreak**

Delarey drives through first thing in the morning to the Kruger Park to take slides to an Anthrax expert. Is it Anthrax?

Agatha returns to see how Milo and the family are doing. Have they listened to her advice or will she be forced to remove Milo from their care?

Meanwhile Charlotte is also having frustrations by vaccinating dogs she believes are being used for hunting, and resigns herself to the fact that working in an environment such as this one is extremely stressful. Does she want to become a community vet?

Can Jonathan overcome his fear of snakes and successfully perform an operation on a Cape Cobra?

Drew returns to the diptank to see if his intervention regarding cattle handling has been a successful one. Have the farmers taken on board what he discussed with them?

Tina stops a donkey cart on the road because she's appalled by the conditions of the donkeys and argues with them. They offer for her to ride with them. Will she take the opportunity to earn their trust?

A call comes out to the students: a rhino has broken across a wildlife park fence. If it isn't recaptured soon poachers from the community will hear about the escape and look to capture and kill the animal for its expensive horn.

The students go in search of the rhino, but with no luck. Dr Greg decides to try to spot the rhino from the air. He selects Roxanne to fly in a microlight with him. Roxanne tells Greg that her family forbids her to go in a microlight. Some of the students respect her parents' wishes, whilst others are desperate for Roxanne to do it. Will she have the courage to defy her parents and make a decision for herself?

### **13. Rhino's and Good Byes**

Dr. Greg spots the rhino from the microlight. The students rush in. Time is against them as poachers could arrive at any moment. The dart gun does not work and they have to get another one wasting more precious time. Delarey has to race to the ascending chopper and hand then the second gun whilst airborne. It's a tricky maneuver.

There is much confusion as to where the rhino has fallen. The vehicle carrying the experienced vet breaks down. Dr. Greg is delayed and unable to reach the rhino. How will the students manage without him and the more experienced team?

The episode and season ends with their final morning of the students' residency. Emotions run high as Dr. Greg wishes his students the best of luck with their careers. But it's the tears of one vet in particular that come as a surprise. The tears say it all: it's been an incredible journey of self-discovery. It's time for them to bid farewell to a mentor and a community that has taught them so much.

Their journey to the frontier has ended, but their journey as a vet has only just began.

