

## Summertime care for abandoned pets

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### By Peter Townson

A group of animal welfare enthusiasts are doing all they can to help abandoned pets and stray animals struggling with the high summer temperatures.

Members of Qatar Animal Welfare Society (QAWS) are currently caring for some 40 cats and kittens, 105 dogs and puppies and 40 farm animals and birds.

This leaves the current shelter heavily overpopulated, and QAWS officials are preparing themselves for what is traditionally the most difficult period of the year, with volunteers travelling home for the holiday and many owners abandoning animals as they leave the country.

“Summer is when the highest number of animals are abandoned by their owners. This may be because they are leaving Qatar for good and unwilling to take their pets with them, are going on vacation for an extended period of time and are not prepared to pay boarding fees, or because boarding kennels are booked up months in advance,” QAWS adoption co-ordinator Kelly Allen told Gulf Times.

“We know of animals that have been with their families for over 10 years but are now up for rehoming as their ‘parents’ don’t want to pay for them to leave Qatar,” she noted, explaining “excuses for abandoning animals runs from ‘it’s too expensive’ to ‘it’s not fair for the animal to go on an aeroplane.’”

“With some of our animals having been up for rehoming for over three years now, abandoning a pet is never an option - every pet owner should prepare for the future and should always have up to date rabies vaccinations and blood tests if necessary to ensure the pets can leave immediately if their circumstances change.”

Rehoming levels are particularly low in the summer months, while fundraising efforts tend to tail off and the shelter’s monthly running costs of around QR40,000 become even more difficult than usual to account for.

Although no particularly unusual cases have been brought to the shelter recently, tales of tragedy and maltreatment are becoming commonplace for QAWS members.

Allen spoke about a few of the animals currently at the shelter, including a saluki, called Logan, found in the desert in Shahaniya with a severely wounded leg. After taking Logan to the vet, they discovered that the wound had been caused by a shotgun. The vet removed a number of pellets from the dog’s back leg, and he is now fully recovered and awaiting a new home, explained Allen.

She also spoke about a female European guarding breed, Tabreez, who was abandoned by a travelling circus when they left Qatar.

“Having spent her life travelling the world as a guard dog, it has taken months of rehabilitation to get her to trust people,” she said, adding “but now she is a fantastic girl who loves people and cuddles.”

Another saluki, Marilyn, was left tied up at the side of the road, also suffering from a severely broken leg. After being examined it was found that she had suffered the break months previously, and had not received any treatment. QAWS is now trying to raise enough money to have the leg amputated to ease movement.

There are some surprising examples of abandoned animals, such as Phyllis the goat, who was found wandering the streets of a local compound and has recently given birth.

The shelter is also the home of Sid, a donkey who turned up outside someone’s house in Al Khor with an injured leg.

QAWS has cared for all sorts of animals over the years, but unfortunately one common thread throughout their rescues is the fact that most have been mistreated in one way or another.

“A large number of them have been abused or are emaciated and we spend a lot of time rehabilitating animals to learn to trust humans again,” explained Allen.

She explained that QAWS currently have around 100 volunteers from a number of schools in Qatar. Students from Qatar Academy, Al Khor International School and Al Jazeera Academy all attend QAWS on a weekly basis, while the group has also received a great deal of support from the International School of London, where students have held a number of fundraising events throughout the school year.

A number of large organisations have also offered continued support to QAWS, such as Al Sharq Village and Spa who recently assisted with refitting the shelter’s puppy cabin.



Phyllis the goat, one of the more unusual animals at QAWS

Anyone interested in helping QAWS should contact them on their website [www.qaws.org](http://www.qaws.org).

[Back to Article](#)

[Homepage](#)