

Animal shelter struggles to find help in summer

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As residents of Doha continue to endure the high temperatures and humidity that mark every summer here, the Qatar Animal Welfare Society (QAWS) is once again attempting to work through what is traditionally the most difficult time of the year for the group.

With large numbers of people leaving the country before the summer arrives, and few people relocating here until before the beginning of the school year in September, this part of the year presents an even larger disparity between abandoned animals and adoptive parents than during other months.

QAWS provides a shelter for rescued cats, dogs and other animals, but as they continue to await charity status from the authorities, their resources are severely limited and they are unable to rescue all the animals they wish to help.

At the moment the shelter is holding over 150 dogs, cats, puppies and kittens which all need to be fed, watered and kept cool throughout the difficult summer conditions, and the group is looking for as much help as possible in providing the necessary items and time to meet the increased demand that this time of the year brings.



Some of the puppies currently at QAWS

Coupled with the tendency of people to simply abandon their animals at the shelter, the group is extremely stretched – a challenge the society face year round, but which is heightened during July, August and September.

Gulf Times spoke to QAWS chairperson, Janet Berry, about the situation, which she describes as worsening on a yearly basis as the population here increases.

“We have never had more than 100 dogs, but we now have 102 dogs at the shelter,” she said, adding: “We are completely full.”

It doesn’t help when people treat their animals as badly as a recent arrival to the farm, Shaun, who was abandoned in a taped up cardboard box in the desert, and was only rescued because a family enjoying a spot of quadbiking noticed the box move.

Luckily the group has always been able to count on strong support from the local community, as well as a number of businesses who continue to donate their time and efforts to help them continue the good work they perform.

Recently, Gulf Contracting Company offered the use of two portacabins which they had finished using on a project, and QAWS gladly accepted the offer of new space in which to house animals.

The cabins will provide a desperately needed medical area to isolate sick animals, provide a space for new mothers and a quarantine area for newly arrived animals.

Extra cat facilities will also be added, catering for around 30 new cat cages, and a part of the new space will be for volunteers, providing a much needed air-conditioned area where they can cool down – especially at this time of year.

However the new portacabins have to be refurbished, and QAWS are hoping that volunteers will be able to help them fit out the new areas.

They are also requesting donations of dog and cat food, and equipment to help them provide for the animals at the shelter.

However, due to the need to provide a consistent diet for the animals, QAWS are specifically requesting donations of Purina dry dog, cat and puppy food.

“Without the help of our supporters, we simply wouldn’t exist,” said Berry, noting that a large batch of new volunteers turned up to the farm last weekend following a plea on Facebook for more help.

“It was great to see so many new people, and we are always looking for more help,” she said.

The chairperson explained that people’s expectations of the group often outweigh the service that the group can provide, noting that the organisation is still a volunteer group of people who are “trying to do their bit.”

And so they require any help on offer, and they look forward to welcoming new faces to the shelter as the word spreads about



A part of the new portacabin units, donated by Gulf Contracting Company, being installed at QAWS

the work QAWS continues to do.

Despite the current challenges, Berry remains hopeful that the situation will improve in the future, and said that new regulations removing the need for quarantining animals returning to the UK and other countries will drastically reduce the number of animals that are usually abandoned in Qatar before the summer.

But for those that have already been left, QAWS are doing their utmost to provide shelter and get them on track for being rehomed.

Anyone interested in volunteering with helping to care for the animals or assist with dog-walking should visit QAWS between Thursday and Sunday between 4-6pm, and a map to the shelter is available on the group’s Facebook page.

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