

## Squalid animal souq a ‘pet hate’

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Animal welfare enthusiasts have once again expressed their concern at the squalid conditions of the animal souq at Souq Waqif, where many of the animals are struggling with the summer temperature as they are left outside. Worried onlookers have contacted the Animal Resource Department at the Ministry of Environment to express their concern about the way the animals are being cared for, and have highlighted the fact that many are being kept in unsatisfactory surroundings and seem to be in poor health.

During a visit last week, the poor condition of many of the animals at the souq was once again abundantly clear to see.

A large number of pets were without food or water when Gulf Times visited the area on Wednesday evening.

When shopkeepers were questioned about the lack of food, and especially water, they replied that the animals had already drunk their water.

“They don’t need water now,” declared one shopkeeper about three obviously hot and thirsty kittens. “Look around the souq - it is the same everywhere!”

Many of the cages housing animals without water or food were also filthy, with animals sitting or lying in their own excrement.

It is fair to say that a number of shops have made improvements and are selling only birds and fish, which is what they are officially supposed to sell at the souq. It seems that some of the shopkeepers are also doing their best to keep their shops clean.

However, other shops selling cats, dogs, rabbits and other animals keep them in poor conditions.

The problems have been consistently highlighted by Qatar Animal Welfare Society (QAWS). Their calls have recently been echoed by a large number of individuals who have written to the authorities to highlight problems and in some cases, suggest solutions.

One enthusiast argued that the people working at the souq should be educated about how to look after the animals, and be provided rules and regulations regarding feeding, watering and cleaning the animal’s cages.

A number of people pointed out that the animals are simply too hot when they are left outside, and that many of them are visibly suffering in the summer climate.

Others expressed their concern about the dyed animals, highlighting the health risks associated with colouring the chicks, rabbits and other animals to make them “more appealing.”

The members of QAWS and other animal welfare enthusiasts also argued that education was a key factor in improving the situation, both in terms of the staff working at the souq, as well as visitors who continue to aggravate and mistreat the animals and are unaware of how to handle them properly.

“The animals need water at all times – especially when it is as hot and humid as it is at the moment,” said one British expatriate, adding “you can see the animals suffering and it isn’t fair.”

“I don’t like it at that place and I would prefer it was shut down, but as it has to exist then I really hope they do something to improve the conditions for the poor animals,” she added.



The animal area of Souq Waqif, which has received many complaints from concerned animal lovers about the condition of the animals on display



Animals are kept outside in the heat, often without food or water

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