

New kennels built for abandoned dogs

Publish Date: Sunday, 21 June, 2009, at 12:01 PM Doha Time

By Peter Townson

As the summer months arrive in Qatar once again, the number of animals being abandoned on the streets of Doha is higher than ever before, according to animal welfare experts, who are feeling the strain.

The team at Qatar Animal Welfare Society (QAWS) have recently completed the construction of 12 new kennels to help alleviate the pressure on the current facility, but the new kennels will only be able to home two new dogs as they have to relocate dogs that are already in the shelter.

“We are full to over our capacity, so the new kennels will give us space to move some of the dogs around,” explained Janet Berry, the chairperson of QAWS.

However, she claimed that if the group had a way to collect funds, they would be able to sustain more kennels, and with the space they have at the current site, they could double their capacity and add another 36 kennels.

The problem the group finds themselves confronted with time and time again is their lack of charity status, something they are still desperately seeking but have yet to be awarded, despite numerous assurances that it is being processed by the authorities. “We recently celebrated our fifth anniversary here in Qatar, and nothing has changed,” said Berry, adding “we still need our charity status and we are still finding the same issues are being presented to us on a daily basis by members of the public.”

Berry explained that there were more animals being abandoned by people who are leaving Qatar this summer than in other years. She described two examples of pets which had been brought to the shelter – one being a pet cat called Sophie who was abandoned in her owner’s garden when they left. After a couple of weeks of living outside alone following her whole life indoors, Sophie was rescued by neighbours, but she was in such a bad state that she could hardly stand up. Now she is being fostered and will hopefully be adoptable in the very near future.

Another pet abandoned recently was Sofiya, a young Saluki mix who was dumped on Safliya island. A group of friends went out to the island for a barbeque and after finding the abandoned dog they decided to bring her home and take her to QAWS.

“She had obviously been badly abused and she had scars and burns all over her body,” said Berry, adding “it looked as if she had been branded on her back.”

Although the response to the shelter has been “overwhelming” as its public profile steadily increases, QAWS is still facing the same difficulties in terms of operating, and costs continue to increase on a regular basis.

The number of volunteers helping out at the shelter has increased in recent months, but with the increased exposure that shelter has also attracted unwelcome attention, as people who find abandoned animals often express their anger at QAWS’ inability to do anything.

“We are too full – we are having to turn so many animals away, and when we tell people that we cannot take the animals in they are starting to shout at us and blackmail us into taking the dogs, threatening that they will simply abandon or have their pets put down,” explained Berry.

“They think we are receiving government support, but we are not and we simply do not have the resources to take in any more animals,” she said, adding “and anyone who has visited the shelter will be fully aware of this.”

Visiting the shelter has also become a more frequent occurrence, with a number of schools now taking trips to QAWS to learn more about animals and looking after them.

Following the success of the group’s fifth birthday party, they explained that they would be hosting more public events allowing people to visit and get close to the animals in the shelter. But these would not be happening until after the summer months.

With the shelter overflowing with abandoned animals and people continuing to leave over the next few months, QAWS has urged people to seriously consider taking their pets with them and not simply abandon them on the streets of Doha as they simply do not have the necessary resources to take care of them at the shelter.



Sofiya, abandoned on the island with visible burn marks

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