

Animal welfare needs improving, says expert

Publish Date: Monday,27 April, 2009, at 12:24 PM Doha Time

By Peter Townson

Animal welfare in Qatar is still in its early stages and much work needs to be done to change certain prevailing attitudes and ensure that things improve further, according to an expert who recently visited the country to investigate the subject.

Invited by the Qatari government to produce a report on the status of animal welfare, Dr Safwat Ali Hassan visited a number of veterinary clinics, private collections and the Qatar Animal Welfare Society (QAWS) to get an idea of how both domestic and stray animals are treated in Qatar.

Upon returning to his practice in Germany, Dr Hassan told Gulf Times that “it is impossible to compare animal welfare in Qatar to Europe, as there is a huge difference between the two. People in Europe have been practicing animal welfare for a long time and it is now one of the characteristics of their culture and society.”

“In Arab countries we need more explanation, understanding and correction of misinterpretations about keeping pets,” he said, adding “I think religious leaders could play a great role changing the social perception, as they could arrange lectures, seminars and discussions in the media about how Islam preaches that we should show mercy to animals.”

He explained that the government needs to provide more funding to animal welfare in general, and especially for the existing shelter at QAWS which he said does its best with the limited resources it has at its disposal.

“One of the most positive things about the situation in Qatar is that there are many people who sacrifice their time to help care both for domestic and stray animals,” he said, adding that the other positive aspect of animal welfare in the country is the fact that the government is keen to improve things, starting by inviting experts such as himself to examine the country and suggest possible areas of improvement.

One specific concern Dr Hassan raised after his visit was the “large number of Husky dogs, which are used to living in very cold conditions, but are being kept in a very hot country.”

He also claimed that the level of medical assistance available to pet-owners in Qatar is not adequate and needs to be improved. During his visit here, Dr Hassan suggested that the Qatari government establish an animal shelter to offer medical care and a place to house stray animals.

Dr Hassan reiterated his belief that such a facility is required to advance animal welfare and assist with the problem of stray animals in the country.

He even provided an example of a possible design for such a facility, and said he would be more than happy to provide any necessary information for getting an animal welfare shelter established.



Dr Safwat Ali Hassan meets one of Qatar's resident pets during his visit

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