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Qatar Animal Welfare Society

A year ago, the Qatar Animal Welfare Shelter (QAWS) was destroyed by fire – but with the help of volunteers and a new premises, it is getting back on its feet [Discuss this article](#)



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It's been a year since the fire at the [Qatar Animal Welfare Shelter \(QAWS\)](#). While most of the animals escaped, everything else was lost. But before the flames were even extinguished, masses of community support streamed in. [QAWS](#) received so much food, water and other daily necessities that the staff didn't have enough storage space available. They also had an unprecedented number of foster families step forward to take in dogs; some of which are still with these families today. Thanks to the help of the community at large, the immediate crisis was managed and a greater one averted.

This helping spirit continues today. In June of this year a much-needed concrete shelter was completed just in time for the worst of the summer heat, and this air-conditioned kennel can hold up to 40 dogs. According to Janet Berry, chairwoman of [QAWS](#): 'Summer is the busiest time of year. Many pets are abandoned when people go on vacation or move. Every day there are more dogs and cats brought in than are adopted out.'



When asked how many animals are housed at the shelter, Janet shakes her head and replies: 'I don't count them anymore.' She adds that they could easily utilise space for 120 dogs. Currently they are filled to capacity and can only take in emergency cases. Already at the beginning of summer they had so many of these that there were 65 dogs on site, with 48 more on the waiting list. The smaller dogs were doubling up, and the calmer ones were sharing space in one of the portacabins with the cats.

'An emergency case could be a long-haired dog that someone leaves outside in the heat,' explains Janet, referring to a golden retriever recently found in a shopping cart at Landmark Mall. 'Imagine wearing a heavy fur coat outside in summer in Doha. How long would you last? It's the same for a dog, and it's not very long.' Dogs can die in the heat after being outside for less than two hours. Leaving food, water and shade is not sufficient to protect a dog in 40-degree heat.

Doha benefits from an organisation like [QAWS](#), and it clearly has support from the community, but because it does not yet have official charity status it can be difficult for large companies to donate money. Efforts have been under way for years to obtain charity status, but as Janet points out this can be a long process. There are many companies who would like to help rebuild what was burnt down, and even make [QAWS](#) better, should the status come through.

'We've got to make donating as easy as possible,' says Janet. One way is to convince supermarkets to feature collection bins.

This would give customers the opportunity to conveniently donate cleaning supplies, animal food or cat litter when they do their weekly shop. Customers could even buy the products at the store and place their donations directly inside.

Other volunteers are helping as they can. Carl Roberts, for example, recently climbed Mount Kilimanjaro to raise money. With the support of [QAWS](#) and sponsorship from the online group I Love Qatar, he set about organising a fundraiser. Individuals and corporations donated both lump sums and set amounts for each kilometre climbed. The trip expenses were completely covered by Carl himself, and all of the donations went directly to the rebuilding of the [QAWS](#) infrastructure.

For Carl the challenge was training for a mountain climb while living at sea level. Forty per cent of those who attempt to climb Kilimanjaro don't make it to the top due to altitude sickness – there's no way of knowing in advance if you'll be one of them. But by training at [QAWS](#) every Saturday, running up and down flights of 200 stairs, and teaching yoga three times a week at Yama Yoga, he became physically fit for the challenge.

[QAWS](#) hopes that in the future it won't take a crisis like the fire to animate sustained community support. They look forward to the day when they can focus on education rather than crisis intervention. But for now, each month, the puppies at [QAWS](#) eat about 150 bags of chow, and the cats around 180 cans of food. Monthly costs often total QR50,000, but as Janet points out: 'There are a lot of people who want to be involved in animal welfare. We have a huge amount of community support from expats and locals. It can be tough, but help always comes through.'

For more information on how you can help, contact [QAWS](#) on 5539 6074 or visit www.qaws.org

By Time Out Doha staff

Time Out Doha, 27 July 2010

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