

## Local

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Fishing boats are moored at Sharq marina. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Dog dilemma in Kuwait

Local Spotlight

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**T**his article is about the situation of dogs in Kuwait and how some of them turn from domestic pets into strays and predators. Who is responsible for this and are there solutions?

I believe that the lives and survival of pets in Kuwait is not easy, because it depends primarily on the owner. The animal might be lucky to have a kind owner who knows how to take good care of the animal, or a crazy owner who practices the worst forms of torture on the poor animal, or young children who do not know how to care of an animal and its needs.

So when they get bored of the pet, they take easiest route by kicking it to the street to suffer from hunger and heat, because the pet is not prepared to deal with the streets or the animals there. Or it could end up at the Friday animal market, which is not better than the street. This is an unfortunate end of a creature that had been predestined to be here, and we bear moral responsibilities that hold us accountable for the harm it suffers.

An expatriate woman sent me a letter about a personal experience related to

dogs in Kuwait, and I will share with the readers some parts of the letter. She said: "I got a little dog a year ago, which I love walking every day. Unfortunately, having a dog has opened my eyes to the miserable world of dogs in Kuwait. On my walks on Abu Hassania beach, I see dead dogs left for weeks (owned by people because they wear a collar), and dogs just dumped by owners starving day by day. I try my best to rescue the dogs I meet, but it's a never-ending story. The animal shelters in Kuwait are overfilled with dogs and puppies and cannot take more dogs."

She added that countries like Turkey have neutering programs to avoid this, while Switzerland requires people to get a dog license before buying a dog. Finally, the woman suggests all expats dumping their animals when they leave Kuwait should be fined big time (KD 500 is my suggestion). This lady is right to worry about the issue of dogs breeding in the streets. I do not think there is something called a stray, but they are animals neglected or left on the street by their owners. Rarely, they may be animals that were lost

or stolen.

I liked the woman's suggestion, because some expatriates when they leave Kuwait leave the animal on the street, especially if they do not find someone to adopt it or if they cannot take it with them because of the high ticket prices and fees required. So a fine is required, but I do not know how to make sure that the returnee had a dog or whether or not they had a license to own a dog. I also do not know who will verify the owner's info.

I believe a dog is a big responsibility, as being a dog owner means you have to walk it daily. I have a cat and every time I need to take it to the vet, it usually takes me a few days to even get an appointment, aside from the cost of consultation and medicine, which is not cheap.

I know some people here don't hate dogs but also don't welcome having them in their houses, especially those who view this matter from a religious perspective. Also, I notice some people do not even pick up the poo while waking their dog. I wish Kuwait bans the import of all dogs and runs education campaigns for people. So before taking

a dog into your house to please the kids, think twice about who will bear the responsibility in case of illness, and the fact that dogs have needs just like human beings.

Stray dogs did not appear out of nowhere, but because of the neglect of some dog owners who abandoned them. They did not go to animal shelters but threw them on the streets, which turned them into sick dogs that breed randomly and cause harm.

The animal health department of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources is legally authorized to deal with animals. I hope that a campaign will be launched to prevent pet shops from selling animals - especially dogs - without a license, and make sure about the identity and age of the owner and their ability to care for the animal. Also, the sale of any animal poison should be prohibited. Dogs should not be killed or poisoned.

Establishing new animal shelters or offering them up for adoption in the West should be done, because a culture of respecting animals and preserving their rights is clearly missing.