



Kuwait pets abandoned in summer travel season

By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

It's the time of the year when everybody is off to their perfect summer escapes, or travel back home to visit their loved ones. It's also the time when you see thousands of pictures on social media of cute pets laying down in suitcases or hiding in backpacks. It's the most stressful time for pets when their owners travel and leave them home alone. Although many have the money to spend on a summer holiday outside the country, not everyone is willing to spend to secure a safe place for their pets while they're away.

Unfortunately, there are no accurate statistics on the number of pets abandoned by their travelling owners, but in Kuwait, such cases abound during the summer. "I will open the door to them so they can survive on the street," said a woman who refused to put her cats in a boarding service.

Boarding Services

"In Kuwait, abandonment cases increase and adoption rates go down during the summer. I've seen some owners who tie their dogs in front of my house and flee because they know that I run an animal shelter," said Ali Al-Saadi, a 29-year-old who himself suffered when he was young because he wasn't able to keep his beloved dog after his father gave it away to someone else. He took an oath then to run a shelter for pets whose owners are no longer capable of looking after them.

Saadi offers boarding services for those who don't want to give up their pets completely. "They can come anytime to visit their pets and play with them. I keep them with me for a minimum amount of money and care for them myself with three helpers. I promote my shelter "5la_3ndy" through Instagram, and right now, I am caring for more than 70 pets," he told Kuwait Times. Saadi believes that his shelter has helped give a second chance to both pets and their owners to remain together.

Not all boarding services in Kuwait are licensed. Some will

exploit pets left by their owners by using them for mating. To emphasize this point, I randomly contacted a "cat hotel" in Kuwait run by a young woman. The moment she came to know that my cat is a purebred, she offered to mate my cat and share the profits of selling her kittens.

Friends and Families

Some people leave their pets with friends and family members, if they're lucky enough to find someone who's willing to help. Hussain Al-Qatari, a PR officer, usually travels between two weeks to a month. "I always let my friends or family take care of the cats when I am gone. They get a key to my house and visit whenever they can. I also leave extra supplies of water and food to be on the safe side," said Qatari.

"Boarding services are overpriced in Kuwait. The facilities are in fact inconvenient. Facility owners do not take into consideration the fact that the pets will be brought away from their comfort zone and familiar territory, and that there is a risk of contracting diseases and infections from other animals. I would much rather that my pets stay at home in their territory," said Qatari, searching for prices of boarding services affiliated with pet hospitals and clinics. "I wouldn't trust the ones run by individuals who are not dedicated fulltime to this task," he said.

"The pets in our house are an important part of our daily life.

My family and I cannot imagine living without them. We have three cats. Keeping animals in the house is not a luxury. I feel it is important because they're our companions. They add so much - in my case with cats, aside from killing and catching pests occasionally, they also create a very loving atmosphere that takes away from your everyday stressful routine" concluded Qatari.

Trust

Like Hussain, Norah Al-Mansour, a teacher, prefers someone she can trust to care for her darlings. "I've been a pet sitter myself. Sometimes, I pet sit cats and dogs by going to their home to change their water and feed them. It's a huge obligation to care for others' pets, as they might get injured under your care. You must also be careful as you might put your own pets at risk when you pet sit someone else's. I wouldn't do pet sitting for strangers though. Pet sitting is important for those who travel a lot and don't have family to help while they're away," she added.

Norah is very passionate about animals and their quality of life. She's been taking in orphaned and injured animals and bringing them home and offering them for adoption through her Instagram account @animalshields. This has only been possible due to the support of her loving mother. "Kuwait needs more shelters and it's my dream to run one someday, as I can only do very little from home," she said.



Hussain Al-Qatari, animal lover and cat rescuer.



Norah Al-Mansour, runs @Animalshields shelter.
— Photos by Athoob Al-Shuaibi